

CUG-H00389-15-P23296

Vol. XV

No. 1

1979-80



JOURNAL  
OF  
THE DEPARTMENT  
OF  
ENGLISH

( FORMERLY BULLETIN OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH )

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**SPECIAL NUMBER ON THE NOVEL**

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UNIVERSITY OF CALCUTTA

# JOURNAL OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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THIS ISSUE HAS BEEN EDITED BY  
AMITABHA SINHA



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THE JOURNAL of the Department of English, Calcutta University.  
*Annual Subscription* : Inland : Rs. 10 00 (inclusive of postage)  
Foreign : £ 1-6s. (inclusive of postage) *Single Copy* : Inland  
Rs. 5 00 (exclusive of postage). Foreign : 16s (exclusive  
of postage).

0 23296

All materials intended for publication in this journal, books for review, business correspondences, subscriptions (Cheques should be made payable to "The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, B.A. & F., Calcutta University"), reprints, journals, etc. should be addressed to :

*Secretary, U.C.A.C.,*  
Journal & Bulletin Section  
Asutosh Building,  
University of Calcutta  
Calcutta-700073.

*Place of Publication*  
Asutosh Building, University of Calcutta, Calcutta-700073.

●  
*Publisher*  
DILIP KUMAR MUKHERJEE



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## FIELDING'S *TOM JONES* : "THE MOOD IS ALMOST NEVER SIMPLE"

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SHANTA MAHALANOBIS

A SIMPLISTIC approach to *Tom Jones* is unrewarding. It is easy to drift into agreement with either of the extremist positions taken by his critics and his admirers. Richardson imputes Fielding with questionable motives in writing *Tom Jones* :

and I had reason to think that the author intended for his second view . . . in writing it, to whiten a vicious character and to make morality bend to his Practices,<sup>1</sup>

and Boswell quotes the redoubtable Dr Johnson as saying "the virtues of Fielding's heroes were the vices of a truly good man".<sup>2</sup> In recent years, critical reactions have been sympathetic. Not only do they perceive in this author an apparent moral seriousness but impose on it a Christian ethical design.

*Tom Jones* is, on different levels, an assertion of the shaping powers of the Creator, of the artist (who as Thackeray long ago observed, appears in this novel as a surrogate providence), and of the moral man—the exemplar of what Fielding referred to in *Amelia* as 'the art of life'.<sup>3</sup>

These contrary attitudes may partly be explained by the decided shift in our assumptions about man and his moral nature from the operative norms of the eighteenth century. But neither takes into account the tentative, exploratory tone of Fielding's presentation of character and incident in this novel. In the omniscient role of author-narrator he is often taken as an index to the moral structure of the novel, a moral center from which the story and its characters radiate. Such assessments seem to discern a sustained moral assurance in the author-narrator through the eighteen books of *Tom Jones* and also imply a unified moral vision akin to Spenser's in *The Faerie Queene*.

In broad outline and in implication Jones' story is not unlike that of Spenser's Redcross Knight, who must also acquire prudence before he may be united with the fair Una.<sup>4</sup>

But a sensitive reading of the passage which prompts Battestin to make this claim reveals the author's reluctant and enforced concession to accepted norms of human conduct for fear of being 'misunderstood' as an advocate of Tom's wanton and wild behaviour. It is only Fielding's recognition of Allworthy's obtuse imperception of Tom's innate, unpublished goodness that makes him counsel the value of Prudence. It is not that Jones *must* also acquire prudence, but that the dull, narrow perceptions of even his so-called 'good' men, make the acquisition of 'prudence' an unfortunate necessity. The author's sympathies lie on the side of 'that poor youth (however innocent)', 'the unfortunate lad' Tom, whose imprudent behaviour compares unfavourably with Blifil's circumspection. The omniscient narrator reluctantly confesses to his readers that

goodness of heart, and openness of temper, tho' these may give them great comfort within, and administer to an honest pride in their own minds will by no means, alas! do their business in the world.<sup>5</sup>

Also :

It is not enough that your designs, nay that your actions are intrinsically good, you must take care they shall appear so. If your inside be never so beautiful, you must preserve a fair outside also. This must be constantly looked to, or malice and envy will take care to blacken it so, that the sagacity and goodness of an Allworthy will not be able to see thro' it, and to discern the beauties within.<sup>6</sup>

The ironic emphasis on 'appear' and 'constantly' is too obvious to be missed and the antithetical placing of 'fair outside' immediately evokes questionable associations of the word 'fair' in Shakespeare and Spenser. Banquo (in *Macbeth*) wonders at Macbeth's troubled response to the witches' prophecy of 'things that do sound so fair' and the proverbial duality of 'fair' and 'foul' is echoed by Shakespeare and Spenser.

Then faire grew foule, and foule grew faire in sight<sup>7</sup>

It becomes apparent then that whatever the nature of Fielding's own thinking about virtue and goodness, he cannot afford to stake his reputation as a novelist by any overt discrediting of accepted moral attitudes in reader, patron and publisher. In *Tom Jones* he undertakes the difficult task of challenging the rigidity of these attitudes without offending public taste. It is one thing to underscore the

limitations of the Richardsonian moral code by methods of parody in *Joseph Andrews* and in *Shamela*, and quite another matter to ponder, reflect on and to embody the findings of the 'moral sense' school of Shaftesbury in the character and person of his controversial hero Tom Jones. The alternately defensive and placating tone of the Dedication to 'The Honourable George Lyttelton Esqr.' exposes a novelist constantly on his guard against the change of immorality and against the danger of failing to guide his readers in the true paths of virtue.

From the name of my patron, indeed, I hope my reader will be convinced, at his very entrance on this work, that he will find in the whole course of it nothing prejudicial to the cause of religion and virtue; nothing inconsistent with the strictest rules, of decency, nor which can offend even the chastest eye in the perusal. On the contrary, I declare, that to recommend goodness and innocence, hath been my sincere endeavour in this history.<sup>8</sup>

Fielding is far less sure of the moral reactions of his readers and critics than of their literary reactions, and far more confident of securing their literary approval than their moral approval. He does not feel accountable to 'any court of critical jurisdiction whatever' for introducing long and short chapters in his novel, 'for as I am, in reality, the founder of a new province of writing, so I am at liberty to make what laws I please therein and these laws, my readers, whom I consider as my subjects are bound to believe in and to obey'.<sup>9</sup> Nor does he doubt that

While I make their interest the great rule of my writings, they will unanimously concur in supporting my dignity, and in rendering me all the honour I shall deserve or desire.<sup>10</sup>

He speaks with the authority of a writer perfectly at ease with the genre of his choice. But in seeking the moral concurrence of his readers he anxiously apologises for his intrusion as moral preceptor. 'It is in reality for my own sake, that while I am discovering the rocks on which innocence and goodness often split, I may not be misunderstood to recommend the very means to my worthy readers, by which I intend to shew them they will be undone.'<sup>11</sup> He hastily goes on to assure them that

Besides displaying that beauty of virtue which may attract the admiration of mankind, I have attempted to engage a stronger native human action in her favour, by convincing men, that their true interest directs them to a pursuit of her.<sup>12</sup>

At this stage one questions all critical assumptions that find in Fielding, the author-narrator, the unshakeable firmness of a 'moral center' in *Tom Jones*. In fact, the central problem of this novel lies in the authors's refusal to force human nature and human experience into any 'unalterable rule of right' and, on the other hand to recommend the possibility of discovering 'virtue' and 'goodness' not as moral absolutes, but as genuine though unpredictable impulses emerging from man's fallible and imperfect nature. A clear indication of this is to be found in his wry comment :

Square said, he had been endeavouring to reconcile the behaviour of Tom with his idea of perfect virtue, but could not.

To ossify the humaneness of such perceptions into the rigidity of a declared moral stance is to defeat and deny the very ends for which this novel was written. These ends become clearer when Fielding's moral questioning in *Tom Jones* is juxtaposed against the facile moral equations attempted in the preface to the earlier novel, *Joseph Andrews*. He commendably lays down the gradations in the reader's reactions to the various vices to be found in the pages of *Joseph Andrews*. 'Great vices are the proper objects of our detestation, smaller faults of our pity.' But Vice is never his central theme here.

The Ridiculous only falls within my province in the present work, and the only source of the true Ridiculous (as it appears to me) is Affectation . . . Now Affectation proceeds from one of these two Causes, Vanity or Hypocrisy<sup>13</sup>.

Such convenient simplifications are left behind in *Tom Jones*. Except in the area of direct narration, the author is engaged in a mental debate with himself on the unreality of absolute doctrinal virtue and the imperative need to seek intrinsic worth in the contradictions of human nature and human experience. His tone is tentative, his discussion open-minded, his method persuasive.

There are a set of religious, or rather moral writers, who teach that virtue is the certain road to happiness and vice to misery, in this world. A very wholesome and comfortable doctrine and to which we have but one objection, namely, that it is not true.<sup>14</sup>

His design is to wipe off this doctrine that lies in his way, to dispute it for its total inapplicability to the amalgam of virtue and vice of which the life and character of his hero is compounded.

While Mr. Jones was acting the most virtuous part unimagable in labouring to preserve his fellow creatures from destruction, the devil, or some other evil spirit, one perhaps cloathed in human flesh, was hard at work to make him completely miserable in the ruin of his Sophia.<sup>15</sup>

The problem then impels him to explore alternative and more relative meanings for the word 'virtue', meanings that would include the evil and unpredictable elements in experience. The history of *Tom Jones* is also the history of the author's persistent efforts at persuading his contemporaries (and occasionally himself) to reconsider the current nomenclatures of virtue and vice and to endorse his search for humane, tolerant and realistic attitudes. For Tom's career of petty, unselfish pilferings and amorous encounters presents difficulties unfamiliar to the creator of Parson Adams. About Parson Adams' unassailable virtue there has never been any doubt among Fielding's contemporaries or among our own. 'Abraham Adams, cudgel and all, is Fielding's conception of the virtuous man,'<sup>16</sup> says a *Times Literary Supplement* reviewer. And even the striking perceptive Lady Mary Wortley Montague, widely-travelled in Europe and the Middle East, conversant with the 'amours' and liaisons of upper-class society in Adrianople, Vienna, Genoa, expresses a preference for Fielding's Joseph Andrews to his 'Foundling'.<sup>17</sup> Lady Mary, Fielding's cousin, had helped him in his career as a playwright and was known for her fresh and unconventional response to social mores. Her letters to her sister, friends and daughter often reveal a spirit of enquiry and a strong, practical sense about the regulation of personal conduct that closely resembles Fielding in its reluctant compromise with 'discretion', another name for prudence.

Vices are often hid under the name of virtues, and the practice of them followed by the worst of consequences. Sincerity, friendship, piety, disinterestedness and generosity are all great virtues, but pursued without discretion become criminal. I have seen ladies indulge their own ill humour by being very rude and impertinent and think they deserved approbation by saying, 'I love to speak truth'.<sup>18</sup>

Parson Adams, more than Tom, combines 'disinterestedness' with the other virtues here outlined and in his delineation Fielding feels no obligation to conciliate the moralists. Irreproachable in his behaviour with Fanny after he rescues her from ravishment, he is ecstatic with joy at her unexpected reunion with Joseph at an inn.

Some Philosophers may perhaps doubt whether he was not the happiest of the three, for the goodness of his heart enjoyed the blessings which were exulting in the breasts of both the other two together with his own.<sup>19</sup>

Like Tom, his 'delight in doing good' and 'in the happiness of man' ensnares him in many dangers within the traditional framework of the journey. But it leaves him strong and purposeful and unsullied. Tom, however, oscillates and fluctuates between extremes of generosity and extremes of irresponsibility. The parallel situations in *Tom Jones* in which Molly Seagrim and Mrs Waters are rescued by Tom have their inevitable sequels in Tom's sexual involvements with these very women, despite his professed love for Sophia—'because a good natured character and sexual love... tend to belong with one another in the moral atmosphere of Fielding's novels'.<sup>20</sup> Parson Adams has a firm moral credibility in a way in which Tom has not. Lady Mary Wortley Montague identifies her real life physician with Parson Adams. Writing to her daughter to send her three of Pinchbeck's watches meant as presents, she explains,

you may imagine they are for presents; one for my doctor, who is exactly Parson Adams in another profession, and the other for two priests to whom I have some obligations.<sup>21</sup>

That Fielding is uncertain and ambiguous about Tom's moral credibility becomes obvious in his repeated attempts to redefine virtue and vice in the ever-changing context of his hero's ethically recalcitrant experiences. That Fielding's uncomfortable uncertainty extends even to the delineation of characters and events other than Tom in this novel, is less apparent. In fact, Leavis' statement that Fielding's attitudes, and his concern with human nature, are simple, and not such as to produce an effect of anything but monotony (on a mind, that is, demanding more than external action) when exhibited at the length of an 'epic in prose', raises a real critical issue. For it diverts critical attention from Fielding's dilemma in making his own enquiries into the moral ambiguities of human conduct acceptable to a reading public with subtly varied (not shifting) moral attitudes. It is to Fielding's credit that he perceives the diversity, and unpredictability of human behaviour as the reverse of 'simple' and that he proceeds to authenticate his perceptions in the pages of *Tom Jones*. This process is necessarily preceded by a relentless and impartial scrutiny of the mechanical reduction of virtue and vice to a matter of sexual ethics, along with the equation of 'virtue' with chastity.



Fielding's amused sarcasm at Square's discomfiture at being discovered by Jones in Molly's room is worth notice. This (Square) exponent of human nature as the 'perfection of all virtue' and vice as a 'deviation from our nature in the same manner as deformity of body is' is discovered among other female utensils in 'a posture (for the place would not bear admit his standing upright) as ridiculous as can possibly be conceived.' The all-perceiving narrator in a delightful tone of feigned regret comments :

Philosophers are composed of flesh and blood as well as other human creatures, and however sublimated and refined the theory of these may be, a little practical frailty is as incident to them as to other mortals. It is indeed in theory only and not in practice, as we before hinted, that consists the difference : for though such great beings think much better and more wisely, they always act exactly like other men.<sup>22</sup>

Having proved the invalidity of theoretical virtue for creatures of 'flesh and blood', in the middle chapters of the novel he affectionately presents Tom and Sophia engaged in the 'Passion of love', which includes and transcends the hunger of the body and yet preserves its natural goodness in contributing to the 'happiness of others'. Once again the author's method is to establish his veracity by first disposing of untenable and erroneous concepts and then portraying a less empirical, more recognisable human emotion at work in Tom and Sophia minus the Richardsonian aura of righteousness.

The lovers now stood both silent and trembling, Sophia being unable to withdraw her hand from Jones, and he almost as unable to hold it.<sup>23</sup>

The controlled understatement of the final compares favourably with the 'virtuous' hysteria of Richardson's Pamela, pursued by her employer.

Now you will say all his wickedness appeared plainly. I struggled and trembled, and was, so benumbed with terror that I sunk down, not in a fit and yet not myself, and I found myself in his arms, quite void of strength, and he kissing me two or three times with frightful eagerness. At last I burst from him and was getting out of the summer house, but he held me back, and shut the door.<sup>24</sup>

Fielding's task of retrieving 'virtue' from doctrinaire improbability and rehabilitating it as a living reality was further complicated by the

multiple irreconcilable moral view-points expressed by his contemporaries. There were the cynics who denied God, denied 'virtue' and denied human perfectibility. 'If Mr Fielding and Mr Hogarth could abate the vanity of the world by shewing its faults so plainly, they would do more than the greatest divines have yet been capable of: But human nature will still be the same, and would I am afraid, furnish them, if they lived till the world ended, with such imperfect objects to represent,'<sup>25</sup> writes one contemporary whose views are fully endorsed by Thwackum who maintained that 'the human mind, since the fall, was nothing but a sink of iniquity, till purified and redeemed by grace.'<sup>26</sup>

At the other extreme were the perfectionists like Square and Dr Johnson.

Vice, for vice is necessary to be shown, should always disgust  
... wherever it appears it should raise hatred.<sup>27</sup>

Neither group however, according to Fielding, was concerned with 'goodness' nor did they consider the practice of goodness as essential to virtue. Their discussions and disquisitions were entirely philosophical and 'In one point only they agreed, which was, in all their discourses on morality never to mention the word Goodness'<sup>28</sup>. Nor did they take into account 'kind and benevolent disposition in human breasts' which is gratified by contributing to the happiness of others.

That in this gratification alone, as in friendship, in parental and filial affection, and indeed in general philanthropy there is a great and exquisite delight.<sup>29</sup>

Love between sexes, he says, 'may be heightened and sweetened by the assistance of amorous desires' but it is firmly planted in 'kindness and benevolence' towards others. 'Good nature is a delight in the happiness of mankind and a concern at their misery, with a desire as much as possible to procure the former, and avert the latter; and this with a constant regard to desert' remarks Fielding in 'The Champion'. Here he attempts a general definition of virtue without further apology. 'I do not know a better general definition of virtue than that it is a delight in doing good.' And this warm and active sympathy which delights the giver (and which he regards as the foundation of all morality) springs from a natural sympathy and good nature. Fielding's stress on the practice of virtue for the good of others more than for oneself, as an actuality as distinct from mere

profession, is part of the pattern of Latitudinarian or Low Church thinking at that time, and also draws much from the writings of Lord Shaftesbury (grandson of Dryden's Achitophel) and the typical English moralist of the 'enlightenment'. In defending human nature against the traditional detractions of religion on the one hand and of Hobbes on the other, Shaftesbury regrets that the divines have denigrated human nature, 'as if good nature and religion were enemies,' and that Hobbes had forgotten to mention 'Kindness, Friendship, Sociableness, Love of company and converse', Natural affection or anything of this kind among the passions and affections which produce society. In the 'Inquiry concerning Virtue or merit' (1699), he proposes to determine which are the 'good and natural' and which the 'ill and unnatural' affections. The virtue of a rational creature consists in a 'rational affection' towards right: a 'just sentiment' or 'proper disposition' Thus a man begins to be virtuous when he makes the conception of Worth and Honesty to be an object of his affection; he is a good man when the natural bent of his affections is towards the good of society. Shaftesbury does not dissolve morality into sentiment. Reason also has its function which is to 'secure a right application of the affections'. But we are not truly virtuous unless feeling coincides with reason; reluctant or merely dutiful well-doing is not genuine virtue. He defines the moral sense as 'a real affection or love towards Equity and Right, for its own sake, and on the account of its own natural Beauty and Worth'.<sup>30</sup> He further divides the 'affections' into three kinds; the 'natural affections, which tend towards the public good', the self affections, which tend towards one's private good, and the 'unnatural' affections which tend towards neither. Virtue depends upon a proper balance between the two first<sup>31</sup>.

Thus the Wisdom of what rules, and is First and Chief in nature, has made it to be according to the Private interest and Good of everyone, to work towards the general Good.<sup>32</sup>

Shaftesbury admits man's moral sense as a natural faculty, links the social affections with living 'according to nature', recognises that self-affections like love of life, resentment of inquiry, love of luxury, interest, ambition, love of praise, or of Rest, when carried to excess become anti-social and vicious, and denounces 'the unnatural passions like inhumanity, misanthropy, tyranny and the rest as productive of nothing but malignity and Rancour. Shaftesbury's insistence on the value of common-sense, Good-humour, Raillery and the Free play of Mind, were valued by those liberal spirits of the eighteenth century who recoiled against 'superstition, enthusiasm, the spirit of faction,

materialism and venality'. Addison and Fielding were among them. In the 'True Patriot' he describes it as a time 'when no man is ashamed of avoiding the pursuit of riches through every dirty road and tract'.

To suggest that Shaftesbury's influence is discernible in Fielding's concern to realize virtue and morality in natural impulses directed to the good of others; and that Shaftesbury's views were at a high premium in his age is not to slight Fielding's real sense of responsibility in communicating this concern to his readers and critics. After discoursing on the kindness and benevolence of which Love is composed he admonishes,

Examine you heart my good reader and resolve whether you do believe these matters with me. If you do, you may now proceed to their exemplification in the following pages, if you do not, you have, I assure you, already read more than you have understood and it would be wiser to pursue your business, e.g. your pleasures (such as they are) than to throw away any more of your time in reading what you can neither taste nor comprehend.

Just as to a blind man the colour red seemed very much like the sound of a trumpet, 'love probably may in your opinion very greatly resemble a dish of soup or a sir-lion of roast beef.'<sup>33</sup>

It was also very important for him to try to reconcile Shaftesbury's optimistic Deistic views with the uncompromising realism of Manderville's Hobbesian premises in *An Enquiry into the Origin of Moral Virtue*. Manderville proposes to

Convince the Reader, not only that the good and amiable qualities of man are not those that make him beyond other animals a sociable creature but moreover that it would be utterly impossible, either to raise any multitudes into a Populous, Rich and flourishing Nation, or when so rais'd to keep and maintain them in that condition without the assistance of what we call evil both natural and moral.<sup>34</sup>

Founding his views on the situation of modern man living in a complex society, Manderville affirms that Virtue far from being natural to man, is 'contrary to the impulse or Nature, a rational conquest of the passions'. Although Fielding does not go all the way with Manderville to suggest that the good of society is produced by the vices of its individual members guided by self-love alone, he neverthe-

less temporizes with the meaner impulses in his 'favourite characters' Allworthy, Black George and Tom, otherwise known for their 'Good-nature'. Black George, for instance, calmly appropriates the 500 pound note concealed in the paper that Allworthy gives Jones at the moment of banishment and that Jones in his violent agonies mislays by the brookside. Not content with this he is even strongly tempted to pocket the small sum of sixteen pounds that Sophia sends Jones to help him out in his misfortune. Fear of consequences deters him in this further theft, but questions of loyalty and gratitude to his unswerving benefactor Jones, are given no weightage.

... the real distinction between the two actions, did not lie in the different degrees of honour, but of safety : for that the secreting the 500 £ was a matter fo very little hazard ; whereas the detaining the sixteen guineas was liable to the utmost danger of discovery.<sup>35</sup>

Anticipating the reader's unease with such sophistry, Fielding defends himself and Black George by saying, 'A single bad act no more constitutes a villain in life, than a single bad part on the stage.' That theft and cheating and disloyalty were second nature to Black George (much to Tom's embarrassment) is forgotten by the narrator. On the contrary, he tries to conceal his own moral ambiguity behind an air of indiscriminate, blustering indignation.. 'The worst of men generally have the words rogue and villain in their mouths, as the lowest of all wretches are the aptest to cry out low in the pit'.<sup>36</sup> The analogy of stage and pit instantly transfers Black George to the world of art and we find Fielding taking shelter in his novelist's privilege which in the eighteenth century permitted him the omniscient manipulation of character and reader. He demands of his reader the controlled and detached reactions of a playgoer to a world of illusion, thereby contradicting the earlier claim of truth to 'Human nature' in its immense variety, as the only fare that his novel has to offer.<sup>37</sup> Life is made to imitate the conditions of art and the irrational driving force of human passions compared with the equally irrational, authoritative manager of a play house apportioning vicious roles to honest men. The point of this transposition of life and art is to modulate and 'civilise' his readers' disapproval of reprehensible acts in characters of good nature and good breeding.

Upon the whole, then, the man of candour and of true understanding is never hasty to condemn. He can censure an imperfection or even a vice without rage against the guilty party.<sup>38</sup>

And not to do this is to be childish, ill-bred, ill-natured and 'low'. The voice of 'decorum' now takes over and threatens the reader with social ostracism, just in case his remonstrances violate its unwritten laws. It is with similar methods of cajolery that he slurs over the gross injustices perpetrated by the benevolent Mr Allworthy in summarily condemning the innocent Partridge, and in banishing Tom on Blifil's instigation. Generous and charitable in his adoption of a bastard child and in his continued approval of that child's kindness of heart in discreditable situations, Allworthy's gullibility is nonetheless underscored in the easy deceptions practised on him by Mrs Partridge and Blifil. In the first instance, Fielding ironically portrays the complete travesty of legal procedures in Allworthy's trial of Partridge (as the bastard Tom's father), and his condemnation of him on the sole and inadmissible evidence of his wife. The trial and the judgement passed are equally peremptory, prejudiced and paradoxical :

He therefore once more exhorted Partridge to confess, but he still avowing his innocence, Mr Allworthy declared himself satisfied of his guilt, and that he was too bad a man to receive any encouragement from him.

But this scene, organized within a structure of antithetical sentences and paragraphs, of ironic mockery juxtaposed with commendation, frames the situation within the limits of art and effectively distances the reader's involvement with the painful economic consequences to the Partridge family. 'Partridge having now lost his wife, his school, and his annuity and the unknown person having now discontinued the last-mentioned charity, resolved to change the scene and left the country where he was in danger of starving with the universal compassion of all his neighbours'.<sup>39</sup> In another context, reluctant to seriously dislodge Allworthy's good breeding and good nature in spite of his blind and misplaced compassion for the plausible Blifil and unjust expulsion of Tom, the novelist attempts to endorse his goodness on the real plane of financial benevolence.

One thing must not be omitted, that in their censures on this occasion, none ever mentioned the sum contained in the paper which Allworthy gave Jones, which was no less than five hundred pounds, but all agreed that he was sent away pennyless and some said naked from the house of his inhuman father.<sup>40</sup>

Here, as later in Blifil's wooing of Sophia, Fielding is careful not to obscure the economic pressures of agrarian capitalism that dominated eighteenth century society. The landowner-tenant relationship is experienced and dramatised in Allworthy and Partridge as is the urge for extension of property in the proposed marriage of Blifil and Sophia. At these points the novel is replaced on a solid, topical footing and Blifil's sordid motives exposed in terms of genuine repulsion. Sophia's aversion for him 'would heighten the pleasure he proposed in rifling her charms, as it added triumph to lust': supplanting poor Jones in her affections promised another additional rapture to his enjoyment; and finally there was the estate of Mr Western, which was all to be settled on his daughter and her issue.

These oscillations in Fielding's perspective between the impersonality of art and the immediacy of life, as also the ambiguity of his evaluations, render it impossible to discern a coherent moral attitude throughout the novel. There are occasions, especially in his studies of London life when he recommends the merely expedient. Tom enters a liaison with Sophia's protector Lady Bellaston simply for financial reasons (with little concern for Sophia's feelings) and decides to continue with his assignation as a means of access to Sophia! Fielding describes Tom's moral equivocations and subterfuges with the full sympathy and insight of the man of the world.

Though Jones saw all these discouragements on the one side, he felt his obligations full as strongly on the other; nor did he less plainly discern the ardent passion whence those obligations proceeded, the extreme violence of which if he failed to equal, he well knew the lady would think him ungrateful; and what is worse, he would have thought himself so. He knew the tacit consideration upon which all her favours were conferred, and as his necessity obliged him to accept them, so his honour, he concluded, forced him to pay the price. This therefore he resolved to do whatever misery it cost him and to devote himself to her, from that great principle of justice, justice by which the laws of some countries oblige a debtor who is not otherwise capable of discharging his debt, to become the slave of his creditor.<sup>41</sup>

The 'debtor-creditor' connection emphasises and excuses the economic need for which Tom sells his body and betrays the same note of cool, expedient self-interest to be seen in Lord Chesterfield's Letters to his Son.

Address yourself to some woman of fashion and beauty, wherever you are, and try how far that will go. If the place be not secured beforehand and garrisoned, nine times in ten you will take it. By attentions and respect you may always get into the highest company.<sup>42</sup>

Lord Chesterfield's insistence on the morality of advantage without which it is 'impossible to rise in the world' and his mild tolerance of the sexual misbehaviour of the age has an aristocratic liberality which is shared by Fielding. Chesterfield remarks,

it is possible for a woman to be virtuous, though not strictly chaste; but it is not possible for a man to be virtuous without strict veracity. The slips of a poor woman are sometimes mere bodily frailties, but a lie in a man is a vice of the mind and of the heart.<sup>43</sup>

The Memoirs of William Hickey, and 'Les Liaisons Dangereuses' by Choderlos de Laclos, a French novelist of the eighteenth century, testify to the libertinism and moral sophistry of the upper classes in an age of roués and demi-mondes. 'Indeed the eighteenth century up to the French revolution was a halcyon time for aristocracy all over Europe', remarks James Laver in *The Age of Illusion*. And in his preface to William Hickey's *Memoirs* Peter Quennell ironically draws attention to the moral evasions of this class. 'For Hickey was an unscrupulous amorist. Yet unquestionably he was also a man of feeling!' Also 'he loved the parent he cheated; and to hurt his father caused him acute pain'.<sup>44</sup> This background of moral jugglery may explain the relative facility with which Fielding renders the scene of Sophia's intended ravishment by Lord Fellamar, prompted and directed by Lady Bellaston. The lady's only motive is a desire to monopolise Tom ('kept' by her) for herself by getting Sophia out of the way. 'Violent methods' would be required to force Sophia into marriage with her ravisher, Lord Fellamar, she tells herself and the reluctant Lord. The monstrosity of this specious logic, as also Lord Fellamar's dastardly attempt (circumstantially averted by Squire Western's appearance), evokes a mere moral quibble in the author.

a scheme was laid between those two noble persons which, though it appeared in no very heinous light to his lordship, (as he faithfully promised, and faithfully resolved too, to make the lady all the subsequent amends in his power by marriage;) yet many of our readers, we doubt not, will see with just detestation.<sup>45</sup>



The genuine horror of such situations and the total baseness of those who design and participate in it are brought out far more forcefully by the 'middle-class' Charles Dickens in *Nicholas Nickleby*. The avaricious usurer Ralph Nickleby conspires to compromise his niece Kate with his aristocratic customers, to boost his percentage of interest. Money dictates his code of morality. But these characters lack the 'sang-froid' of upper class society and yield, though temporarily, to a decent impulse of which Lady Bellaston is incapable. Her 'Fie upon it! have more resolution. Are you frightened of the word rape?', outdoes the usurer in its ruthless cynicism. When Kate Nickleby expresses her sense of outrage at her uncle's designs, Ralph realizes that 'here was a young girl who had done no wrong save that of coming into the world alive; who had patiently yielded to all his wishes; who had tried hard to please him—above all, who didn't owe him money—and he felt awkward and nervous'.<sup>46</sup> Dickens' evaluation of the scene shows an honest, unshirking moral sense that the aristocratic Fielding evades. Nor does the Lord Fellamar scene have the alleviating touches of Fielding's comic art, for indeed mirth and laughter would be inappropriate here.

In the novel *Tom Jones* then Fielding veers between the direct, anti-Richardsonian moral criticism of *Joseph Andrews* and the more subtle and painful realizations of his later novel *Amelia*. Unable always to turn his human scoundrels into harmless fellows and to dissipate horror in mirth and laughter, he shifts and varies his moods and morals, stretching their flexibility to the extreme. The strain shows in the moral uncertainty of his tone. For the mood is almost never simple. In this tentative, complex, exploratory tone (focussed in his method), lies his worth as a novelist.

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# THE HAPPY ENDINGS IN JANE AUSTEN'S NOVELS

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SUSMITA RAY

## I

IN discussing Jane Austen's comedy in the context of nineteenth-century criticism, Rachel Trickett writes: "Until Meredith, the main stress in nineteenth century criticism was upon humour, a particular mood and temper of comedy, rather than on comedy as a form."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, several critics who have dealt with the different aspects of Jane Austen's humour, have never given considerable attention to the fact that each of her six novels ends with a happy union of lovers. For Jane Austen a happy end means, of course, marriage; and in regarding marriage as the real consummation of sincere love and a necessary condition for a happy life for anyone, she is actually following a large body of comic writers including Shakespeare, for whom comedy means a happy union of the lovers in marriage.

All tragedies are finished by a death.

All comedies are ended by a marriage.<sup>2</sup>

This may be an oversimplification, but it definitely speaks of a strongly established convention. And in order to enjoy the artistic delight which Jane Austen's novels offer we must accept the convention of marriage in a romantic comedy—the convention that two people are so complementary that their union in marriage must achieve harmony.

Many critics have found fault with the endings of Jane Austen's novels on the ground that she gave undue emphasis to a particular aspect of life—matrimony. We can, of course, find a certain sociological explanation for the preoccupation with marriage: Jane Austen was writing at a time when single and unprovided women of the middle class had no refuge open to them but the post of a governess. (This was really going to be the fate of Jane Fairfax in *Emma* as an alternative for her marriage with Frank Churchill.) However, by

no means can we say that Jane Austen's interest in marriage is a unique element in her artistic temperament. Starting from Shakespeare's romantic comedies, *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, or *Much Ado About Nothing*, down to the plays of Congreve, Goldsmith and Sheridan, English comic drama maintains a tradition of happy endings in marriage. In the field of the comic novel, Fielding's *Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews*, or Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* all end in marriage. How deep-rooted the convention is can be shown by a play like *Two Gentlemen of Verona* which assumes that the audience will accept the marriage of Julia and Proteus as a sort of happy conclusion, which even Proteus' shameless inconsistencies cannot untune.

While accepting the traditional emphasis on marriage in any comedy, Jane Austen also follows her predecessors in structural design. The form of comedy usually consists of a contrived pattern which does not bring in the happy ending too easily. There are usually all sorts of complications in a comic plot. There are often a number of triangular affairs. Sometimes one triangle is dissolved into another; sometimes again three members of two triangles form a third one. The classic example of this love-entanglement in a comedy occurs in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. At the beginning of the play, both Lysander and Demetrius are in love with Hermia, while Helena is in love with Demetrius. By the middle of the play, the misapplied magic of the fairy king changes the Lysander→Hermia←Demetrius triangle to the Lysander→Helena←Demetrius triangle. At last, the fairy king's further intervention puts an end to the confusion, the play ends with the happy marriage of two couples. In some comedies again, we find one character pursuing another and being pursued by a third one, as in *Twelfth Night* (Viola→Orsino→Olivia→Viola). All these devices of comic entanglement in the love-affairs of the main characters are present in Jane Austen's novels, too, though they do not always create serious complications. For example, in *Northanger Abbey*, John Thorp is interested in Catherine who is already in love with Henry Tilney, and in *Pride and Prejudice* Miss Bingley incessantly pursues Darcy while he is admiring Elizabeth secretly. Then, in *Sense and Sensibility*, we have quite serious triangular affairs : Lucy→Edward←Elinor and Willoughby→Marianne←Colonel Brandon. In *Mansfield Park*, there are two major triangles and two minor ones (Fanny→Edward←Mary, Fanny←Crawford←Maria, and Maria→Crawford←Julia, Crawford→Maria←Rushworth). In *Persuasion*, the triangle of Louisa→Wentworth←Anne dissolves into the triangle of Elliot→Anne←Wentworth. And last of all, *Emma*

abounds with triangular affairs as a result of the heroine's match-making endeavours: Robert Martin→Harriet→Elton, Harriet→Elton→Emma, Emma→Frank Churchill→Jane, and Emma→Knightley←Harriet.

Now it is the special art of comedy to display these various complications, so that we are delighted by the way they postpone the denouement. The delight arises from a feeling of safety. For though these contrivances continually disappoint our expectation of the happy ending, they never really destroy the hope that everything will turn out well in the end. The forces of evil are at work in *As You Like It* or *Much Ado About Nothing*, they even cloud the atmosphere for a time—for example, at the time of Rosalind's banishment or Claudio's rejection of Hero. And yet, they cannot darken the prospects of happiness for the heroes and the heroines for long. In Fielding's novels, all the obstacles in the path of the hero and the heroine are dissolved suddenly at the end of the book by means of a single discovery or a series of discoveries. In the plays of Congreve, Goldsmith or Sheridan, either the intrigues against the hero and the heroine break down just in time (the plot against Mirabeau and Millamant in *The Way of the World*) or the blunders on the part of the main characters are corrected at the right moment. (Marlow mistakes Kate Hardcastle for a barmaid in *She Stoops to Conquer* 7). The evils in a comedy are, in a sense, mock-evils; and even if we take them seriously for the time being, we maintain a secret belief that all will be well with our heroes and heroines. These evils, however, vary in the degree to which they threaten the happy ending. In *Northanger Abbey* and *Pride and Prejudice*, for instance, Catherine's expulsion from the Abbey, Bingley's disappearance or Lydia's elopement cannot give us any serious concern because the very mood and tone of the novel forbid it, while in *Mansfield Park* or *Persuasion* or *Sense and Sensibility* the uncertainty about the fate of the heroine carries the novels almost to the level of tragi-comedy.

There is, however, one important point in which Jane Austen's comic art differs from that of her predecessors. While in Fielding, Goldsmith or Sheridan the obstacles to happiness are often external, in her novels the obstacles are internal, that is to say, they often consist in some sort of misunderstanding or misadjustment in the mind of the hero or the heroine. Shakespeare's comic plays are full of usurping dukes (Duke Frederick Angelo), stern authoritarian fathers (Egeus in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), inhuman laws (the law of

killing Syracusans, the law of compulsory marriage, the law that confirms Shylock's bond) and unscrupulous villains (Don John in *Much Ado About Nothing*). In short he deals with many external evils which make one of his characters exclaim: "the course of true love never did run smooth."<sup>3</sup> This saying is true of Jane Austen's novels too. But she uses no external machinery to cross the fortunes of her lovers. There are no unscrupulous villains, villains like Blifil or Thornhill, to make the innocents suffer. At times we encounter the foolish, miserly or domineering aunts of Congreve and Sheridan—Mrs Norris and Lady Catherine but they are totally ineffective as agents of evil which threaten the happiness of the young. In *Northanger Abbey*, the General's resentment is an external force which drives Catherine away from the company of Henry Tilney. However, we are anxious about our heroine at the time of her departure from Northanger Abbey not because of the father's hostility but because we are not yet sure about Henry's attitude towards her. It is Darcy's pride and Elizabeth's prejudice in *Pride and Prejudice* that delay their union and not any machinations of Lady Catherine or Miss Bingley. To go on, in *Emma*, it is the heroine's ignorance of her own self that keeps her blind to the fact of Mr Knightley's love for her. In *Persuasion*, while Anne yields her happiness to overpersuasion, Wentworth goes to the other extreme and mistakes Louisa's senseless obstinacy for determination of character. Edmund in *Mansfield Park* is caught by the superficial glitter of Mary Crawford and compromises his own moral judgment. In *Sense and Sensibility*, too, in spite of the power of the dominant mother, what really keeps Edward away from his true love is his own mistaken conception of "honour". He considers his engagement with Lucy to be a real bond of honour, while she looks at the whole affair from a totally expedient point of view. Indeed, what really threatens the happy ending in each of these novels is no evil fortune but a "vicious mole", so to speak, in one or two of the leading characters.

This "comic flaw" is, of course, far less serious than the "tragic flaw". It is nonetheless an evil which must be overcome in order to attain the happy end. The denouement of Jane Austen's novels illustrates primarily the process whereby the good qualities as they predominate over the bad in the same characters, ultimately triumph. There are no elaborate machinations of mistaken identity, sudden discovery or disguise as there are in Shakespeare (*Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night*), Fielding (*Tom Jones* and *Joseph Andrews*), Goldsmith (*The Vicar of Wakefield*). The Duke in *Measure for Measure* or

Mr Burchell in *The Vicar of Wakefield* are something like the disguised king of the Arabian Nights who directs the course of action like a benevolent deity. But for Jane Austen, just as her settings are wholly naturalistic, so the resolutions of her novels never go beyond the limits of probability. No goddess Fortune rules supreme in her world, and the single instance of a lucky removal of the chief impediment is Edward's unexpected release from Lucy following her marriage with Robert Ferrars. In all the rest of her novels, the happy endings come not through chance but through a dramatic action in which one of the leading characters learns something important enough about reality and his own nature, to experience a deep change of mind or heart.

## II

The comic and the tragic characters alike "learn through suffering", writes Wylie Sypher, the only difference is that the suffering in comedy takes the form of humiliation, disappointment, or chagrin, instead of death. Sypher cites an example from *Much Ado About Nothing*: "When Benedick makes the startling discovery that he himself, together with the other mistaken people in the play, is a fool, there is, he says, a moral perception that competes with tragic 'recognition'. The irony of Benedick's 'recognition' is searching, for he has boasted all along that he cannot find it in his heart to love any of Eve's daughters, least of all Beatrice. And Beatrice for her part has avowed she will never be fitted with a husband until God makes men of some other metal than earth . . . Then, they both walk, wide-eyed like 'proud' Oedipus, into the trap they have laid for themselves. There they see themselves as they are . . . At the extreme of his own shame, Benedick is compelled to see himself as he sees himself as he sees others, together along a low horizon. Thus occur the comic purgation, the comic resignation to the human lot, the comic humbling of the proud, the comic ennobling after an act of blindness."<sup>4</sup> All through the six novels of Jane Austen, we have seen this same process of comic redemption. The happy endings in these novels, therefore, have a philosophic significance which classes them with the great comedies of all ages.

Unlike some of her predecessors, Defoe, Richardson and Fielding, Jane Austen betrays no intention of preaching morals; but the conclusions of her novels testify that she is guided by a sound moral principle. As Northrop Frye writes, "the normal response of the audience to a happy ending is 'this should be' which sounds very much

like a moral judgement.”<sup>6</sup> This saying is true of Jane Austen’s novels too. In them, the persons of integrity are always disposed to happiness, and the shallow ones, the crooked ones are either punished or left to themselves. Nor is there a single instance of a genuine attachment ending in failure. On the other hand, all the “bad” characters are punished in an indirect way, that is, they miss what they desire. If we closely examine the last chapters of these six novels, we find that not a single character is forgotten by the author. Isabella Thorp’s only thought in life is to get a good husband. She succeeds in securing a match with James Morland. But her ambition makes her fall a victim to Captain Tilney. As her designs on Tilney fail, she has already lost James. Isabella’s husband-hunting avails her nothing, while both Catherine and Elinor are happily married to the men of their choice. In *Sense and Sensibility*, Lucy Ferrars is of course happy in her own way; but Jane Austen holds the two family circles—Lucy, Roberts, Mrs Ferrars, John and Fanny Dashwood in one circle, and Elinor, Edward, Marianne, Colonel Brandon, Mrs Dashwood, Sir John and Mrs Jennings in the other—widely apart on two different mental planes, so that the reaction of the reader to Lucy’s happiness is only moral contempt. Willoughby’s punishment for his misconduct is an unhappy married life, just as Wickham’s punishment is financial hardship. There are no really “bad” people in *Emma*. It, therefore, ends with general felicity. In *Persuasion*, Sir Walter and Elizabeth are left in their unhappy self-centered world, with the possibility of a spinster-life for Elizabeth. Nowhere in her novels, however, Jane Austen’s moral judgment is more pronounced as in *Mansfield Park*. While Susan, Fanny’s sister is promoted to the blessed world of Mansfield Park, not only the Crawfords but also Maria and Aunt Norris are banished from it.

The question arises whether this moral lesson of “virtue rewarded and vice defeated” is compatible with the demands of realism. In real life things do not always happen in the way they should. Quite often an Edmund cannot resist the charms of a Mary, and repents for the mistake only when it is too late. In the same way a Captain Wentworth mistakes a Louisa’s headstrong attitude for determination of character and is not disillusioned soon enough. How does it happen, then, that Jane Austen, whom critics have often hailed as a “realist”, always draws a happy conclusion to each human drama she presents? Here we should recall that Miss Austen is a writer of romantic comedy, precisely of the Shakespearean type. The world of romantic comedy is ruled by a benevolent deity, just as the world of tragedy is often swayed by the blind and destructive powers of fate,



Comedy always presents a picture of life in which absolute sincerity and genuine and passionate emotion triumph ultimately over falsehood, superficiality, and triviality. The business of the comic artist is to give proper artistic expersion to this picture without violating psychological realism; and that Jane Austen is perfectly successful in this task is a point beyond controversy.

Several critics have discerned the Cinderella-theme hidden in most of Jane Austen's novels. With the single exception of *Emma*, none of her heroines is wealthy. The Bennet estate is going to pass into the hands of Mr Collins; the Dashwood sisters are left nothing in the will of old Dashwood; Fanny is a poor, dependant relation in the Bertram household; and Anne is the neglected child in the Elliot family. Elinor and Elizabeth are, at least, surrounded by affectionate relations and friends. But Anne and Fanny are most of the time in the position of the neglected step-daughter—Anne is attending her sick nephew while all the rest are enjoying the evening; she plays for others while the others are dancing; and Fanny is under continual mental torture from Aunt Norris (the step-mother of Cinderella who would not include her in the Southern party). In *Emma*, it is Jane Fairfax who is the Cinderella-heroine. All the heroes—Darcy, Edmund, Wentworth, Colonel Brandon, Henry Tilney, Bingley, and Frank Churchill—play the fairy prince in rescuing these heroines from uncertain futures and financial insecurity. Even Emma is rescued from her "martyrdom" to her "father's cause" by Mr Knightley. However, there is no magic wand to turn pumpkins into chariots. There is not even a sage to change the mind of a usurping duke (*As You Like It*), or a pleasant gale to bring the lost ships back (*Merchant of Venice*).

If we compare Jane Austen's novels with the unreal and artificial novels of her day—novels charged with "sensibility", recording always "the cruel persecution of obstinate fathers" and "the determined perseverance of disagreeable lovers"—we can better understand how natural her art is. As Hannah More once observed, in those novels of sensibility nothing ever happened in a natural way:

The characters grow rich by the stroke of a wand, and poor by the magic of a word; the disinherited orphan of this hour is the overgrown heir of the next; now a bride and bridegroom turn out to be a brother and sister; and the brother and sister prove to be no relation at all.<sup>6</sup>

Jane Austen, as we have already seen, reaches her happy conclusions without the aid of all these artificial devices. Not only that, her punishment for the "wicked" never goes beyond what is natural. In speaking about Henry Crawford at the end of *Mansfield Park* she says :

In this world the penalty is less equal than could be wished ; but without presuming to look forward to a juster appointment hereafter, we may fairly consider a man of sense like Henry Crawford, to be providing for himself no small portion of vexation and regret.

Mary is to be content with "coxcombs and idle heir-apparents" in future. That is her only punishment and not a loss of fortune or life-long misery. Willoughby, we are told, repents for his past conduct.

But that he was for ever inconsolable, that he fled from society, or contracted an habitual gloom of temper, or died of a broken heart, must not be depended on—for he did neither.

This is one of those wonderful ironical touches with which Jane Austen elevates her moral judgement into art and it is these same touches which also distinguish her artistic temperament from that of many of her contemporaries.

We have noted the happy endings worked out in various novels of Jane Austen and the philosophic and moral significance of these happy conclusions. It remains for us to see, finally, how the happy ending works on the minds of Jane Austen's readers. *Northanger Abbey* ends with the lines :

The anxiety which in this state of their attachment must be the portion of Henry and Catherine, and of all who loved either, as to its final event, can hardly extend, I fear, to the bosom of my readers, who will see in the tell-tale compression of the pages before them, that we are all hastening together to perfect felicity.

Here the author is plainly mocking the conventional happy ending. And yet, the happy ending in this novel is exactly what the reader wants. It satisfies all his emotional expectations; for the author's irony instead of destroying the romantic spirit, rather enlivens it by

saving it from cloying sentimentalism. Shakespeare would not spare his "romantic lover" for spoiling the trees in the Forest of Arden, and yet his comedies are as romantic in spirit as any comedy can ever be. The same is true of Jane Austen's comic novels. As Northrop Frye writes, the endings in the Shakespearean type of romantic comedy symbolise the triumph of spring over winter.<sup>7</sup> Within her limited world, within her "comic microcosm" so to speak, Jane Austen achieves something of the same spirit. The endings of her novels suggest the triumph of spring—of youth and human vitality—over calculated prudence, over mercenary interests and social discrepancies, just as the endings of Shakespeare's great comedies symbolise the ultimate triumph of love and youth over the struggle for power, over political and personal rivalries, over revenge and hatred

Proceed, proceed, we will begin these rites  
As we do trust they'll end, in true delights,

says the Duke in *As You Like It*, celebrating the three happy marriages at the end of the play. As we close the books of Jane Austen, we feel that she is saying the same thing about her young couples, the representatives of the spring, though the boisterous spirit of the Elizabethan dramatist is replaced by a sense of calm delight.

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## POINT OF VIEW IN THACKERAY

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S. K. SINHA

THE particular point of view from which a novelist narrates his stories is a fundamental element in the novelistic technique. The novelist can tell his story from the inside, that is, he can make one of the characters perform the narrator's role, or he can tell his story from the outside as a more or less omniscient author. The artistic exploitation of the point of view begins with Henry James. We agree with Joseph Warren Beach when he calls Henry James "the only English writer in the past who has given extended and detailed consideration to questions of technique". It becomes difficult, however, to concur so readily with Beach when he says that "the novelists most interested in technique—that is, in the way the story was told—before the time of James, were probably Dickens and Wilkie Collins."<sup>1</sup> The exclusion of Thackeray in the above statement indicates the general indifference of critics as to Thackeray's exploitation of the 'point of view' in his novels. The accepted opinion, that Thackeray uses the omniscient point of view is incomplete and, therefore, somewhat misleading. Thackeray was aware of the importance of the point of view. And in order to appreciate his achievement in the direction we must go to his novels.

The point of view in *Barry Lyndon*, Thackeray's first novel, is pretty consistently limited to the character-narrator, Barry. The effects of this point of view are certainly interesting. The novel is in the form of a fictional memoir, and we see everything through the eyes of Barry who is the central character in the novel. Barry is always present and is engaged in a continuous process of glib self-exposure. This results in the creation of the desired 'egotistic tone' in the book. The novelist's purpose is served. The braggart Irishman is able to open himself through the first-person narrative which Thackeray calls the 'right line I.' The volubility of Barry's foolish bragging is expressed in all statements that he goes on making. Here is an example:

I presume that there is no gentleman in Europe that has not heard of the house of Barry of Barryogue, of the kingdom of Ireland, that which a more famous name is not to be found in Gwillim or D'Hozier; and though as a man of the world I have learned to despise heartily the claims of some *pretenders* to high birth who have no more genealogy than the lackey who cleans my boots, and though I laugh to utter scorn the boasting of many of my countrymen, who are all for descending from kings, of Ireland, and talk of a domain no bigger than would feed a pig as if it were a principality; yet truth compels me to assert that my family was the noblest of the island, and, perhaps, of the universal world; while their possessions, now insignificant, and torn from us by war, by treachery, by the loss of time, by ancestral extravagance, by adhesion to the old faith and monarch, were formerly prodigious, and embraced many counties, at a time when Ireland was vastly more prosperous than now, I would assume the Irish crown over my coat-of-arms, but that there are so many silly pretenders to that distinction who bear it and render it common.<sup>2</sup>

Barry is buttressed by an absolute egotism which enables him to unfold, with a straight face and with no sense of shame, the record of misspent life. Thackeray lets the heartless and depraved rascal tell his story in his own terms. Barry puts so fine a colour upon the meanest of his actions, that while the reader detects his villainy in every line, he (the narrator, Barry) himself manages to preserve the placid air of one who has been more sinned against than sinning. The reader thus maintains his own point of view, and the narrator maintains his, each point of view being different from the other. The hero's voice of commonplace conviction makes the narrative a sustained and consummate piece of irony. Barry's statements thus become the author's amusing exposé of Barry's character. The point of view is fully exploited for ironic purposes, thanks to the glaring gap between Barry's self-justification and excesses of his past life. Here is an instance:

I was by this time one of the best-known characters in Europe; and the fame of my exploits, my duels, my courage at play, would bring crowds around me in any public society where I appeared. I could show reams of scented paper to prove that this eagerness to make my acquaintance was not confined to the *gentleman* only, but that I hate boasting, and

only talk of myself in so far as it is necessary to relate myself's adventures, the most singular of any man's in Europe. (*Ibid.*, p. 181)

His mock-heroic defence of gambling (*ibid.*, pp. 128-30) is a piece of genius. And the epitome of the book is contained in one superb sentence of self-vindication: "For the first three years I never struck my wife, but when I was in liquor." (*Ibid.*, p. 252)

Thackeray's handling of the first person narration in *Barry Lyndon* is a piece of achievement. The device, albeit, imposes a severe limitation on the narrative; nothing can happen in the novel unless Barry is present or unless someone retails information to him. Barry's awareness of things which he did not witness is incorporated, as a part of the whole personal experience which he is engaged in setting forth, without any cumbersomeness:

In Oliver's time it was too late for a chief of the name of Barry to lift up his war-cry against that of the murderous brewer. We were princes of the land no longer; our unhappy race had lost its possessions a century previously, and by the most shameful treason. This I know to be the fact, for my mother has often told me the story... (*Ibid.*, p. 4).

Thackeray has succeeded in retaining the reader's constant interest not merely by making his central character engaging; but also by keeping the reader always abreast of the turn of events in which Barry was not a participant, or a witness. The reader follows with bated breath, the details of Barry's escape from Berlin in disguise amidst the ringing of alarm bells and hectic search for the deserter. Barry reaches Saxony safely. Immediately after, the reader is presented a letter from Chevalier de Balibari to his nephew Barry, which gives, in brief, a dramatic description of the consequence of the escape on the Chevalier. And then follows Barry's narrative: "And by these wonderful circumstances I was once more free again..." (*ibid.*, pp. 124-25). The narrative flow is not disturbed; the dramatic intensity is maintained. Thackeray's measure of success in handling the restricted point of view in *Barry Lyndon* is in no way less noteworthy than Dickens' in his *David Copperfield*.

In *Vanity Fair*, Thackeray's first major work, and in *Pendennis*, the narrator remains anonymous. The narrative is predominantly in the third person, though the commentary, at times, is in the first person. Undoubtedly *Vanity Fair* is a triumph of the narrative in

many respects, even though signs of strain are apparent in it. When the story reaches Pumpnickel, for instance, the author can no longer keep himself out of it. The 'right line I' which he has been careful to avoid up to then appears suddenly in Chapter LXII where his mask of aloofness drops off: "It was...at the comfortable ducal town of Pumpnickel that I first saw Colonel Dobbin and his party."<sup>3</sup> Then in Chapter LXVI, comes an unexpected authorial statement:

...the Secretary of Legation, Tapeworm...poured out into astonished Major's ears such a history about Becky and her husband as astonished the querist, and supplied all the points of this narrative, for it was at that very table years ago that the present writer had the pleasure of hearing the tale.  
(*Ibid.*, p. 849)

In *Pendennis* the author dwells on Arthur's university career and his attempt to shine as a poet in the University—"he had his verses printed at his own expense," and

I found a copy of it lately in a dusty corner of Mr. Pen's bookcases, and have it before me this minute...<sup>4</sup>

And again,

As all this narrative is taken from Pen's own confessions, so that the reader may be assured of the truth of every word of it, and as Pen himself never had any accurate notion of the manner in which he spent his money, and plunged himself in much deeper pecuniary difficulties, during his luckless residence at Oxbridge University, it is, of course impossible for me to give any accurate account of his involvements, beyond that general notion of his way of life, which we have sketched a few pages back. (*Ibid.*, p. 234)

Such introduction of the 'right line I' in the body of the tale, as if an actual witness is present close by, lends a certain degree of authenticity to the events. The authorial explanation accords well with Thackeray's conception of the novel as history. He writes in *The Paris Sketch Book*:

I am sure that a man who, a hundred years hence, should sit down to write the history of our time, would do wrong to put that great contemporary history of 'Pickwick' as a frivolous work...like 'Roderick Random',...and 'Tom Jones'

...[it] gives us a better idea of the state and the ways of the people, than one could gather from any more pompous or authentic histories<sup>5</sup>

Brunetiere, the famous French critic, remarked about Balzac's novels that "...as a whole they are equivalent to 'memoirs of use for the history of society in his time'."<sup>6</sup> This remark generally applies to Thackeray's novels as well. The 'memoir-pose' is a significant feature of his novels. Doubtless *Pendennis* reads more or less as a biography of the hero, his growth from boyhood to maturity, his education and ultimate attainment of self-knowledge and knowledge of the world. And Thackeray performs the role of the biographer and editor of Pen's life-history.

In *The Newcomes* Thackeray uses Pendennis as the biographer-editor. He wrote to Mrs. Baxter when he embarked on this novel: "Mr. Pen is to be the writer of his friend's memoirs, and by the help of this little mask...I shall be able to talk more at ease than in my own person. I...am immensely relieved by adopting it."<sup>7</sup> Thackeray is at pains to keep the point of view consistent in this novel. Arthur Pendennis, the narrator, is a friend of Clive Newcome, the central character in the novel. Pendennis is piecing Clive's life together from "stray papers, conversations reported to him," and gives his assessment, right or wrong, of the characters of the persons involved. Thackeray realises that this relation between himself and his material imposes upon him the necessity of explaining his persona's knowledge of things. Thackeray, therefore, is always at pains to sort out the problems arising out of the point of view adopted in the novel. In *Henry Esmond*, and in *Barry Lyndon* too, such a problem did not come up because of the autobiographical form of the novels. Thackeray makes it clear that Pendennis is not omniscient as a narrator :

...in the present volumes, where dialogues are written down which the reporter could by no possibility have heard, and where motives are detected which the persons actuated by them certainly never confided to the writer, the public must once for all be warned that the author's individual fancy very likely supplies much of the narrative; and that he forms it as best he may, out of stray papers, conversations reported to him, and his knowledge, right or wrong, of the characters of the persons engaged. And, as is the case with



the most orthodox histories; the writer's own guesses or conjectures are printed in exactly the same type as the most ascertained patent facts.<sup>8</sup>

Thackeray refuses to endow his narrator with the novelist's prerogative of omniscience: "That a biographer should profess to know everything which passes, even in a confidential talk in a first-class carriage between two lovers, seems perfectly absurd . . ." (*ibid.*, vol. II, p. 33). Thackeray, however, takes care to reiterate that the narrative has the stamp of credibility: "All this story is told by one, who, if he was not actually present at the circumstances here narrated, yet had information concerning them and could supply such a narrative of facts and conversations as is, indeed, not less authentic than the details of other histories" (*ibid.*, p. 92). By using Pen as the narrator, Thackeray, writes John Dodds, "gives the story the air of actuality which comes with an eye witness report. It suits Thackeray's objective method, which reports the feelings of his people largely on the basis of what can be seen and heard, without trying to get deeply into their stream of consciousness." "Thackeray supplements this objective approach," adds Dodds, "by Pen's interpretations. Pen himself is unobtrusive enough particularly before his marriage."<sup>9</sup> Pen gives conflicting attitudes to the action he is describing. Warrington and Laura, for instance, hold different opinions on Colonel Newcome's actions. Pen himself is in a dilemma, unable to grasp the actions and character of Colonel Newcome. Here are his words:

In the stage which the family feud now reached, and which the biographer of the Newcomes is bound to describe, there is one gentle moralist who gives her sentence decidedly against Clive's father; whilst, on the other hand, a rough philosopher and friend of mine whose opinions used to have some weight with me, stoutly declares that they were right".<sup>10</sup>

Pen's shakiness, however, is not a sign of the weakness of the narrative method. On the other hand it is a part of the technical brilliance of the novel. When Pen is unable to see steadily and see the whole, the action is automatically distanced. There is a shifting of responsibility and, as a result, no mechanical reiterations of comments and judgements. The technique helps the novelist to weave a very subtle and artistically excellent pattern with some of the key incidents of the novel. With Pendennis as the narrator Thackeray got more freedom to write of things he could not have done in his person; this is borne out by the narrative. The elopement of Clara with Lord High-

gate is a topic of the kind which was indeed dangerous to deal with in the Victorian novel. But the ingenuity with which Thackeray handles the incident eliminates altogether repercussions to the contrary. The favourable review in *The Times* followed by Charles Mudie's renewed order for *The Newcomes* for his circulating library, indicates the appreciation gained by the novel. It is only by his dexterous handling that Thackeray did away with the possibility of encouraging the Victorian readers to conclude that he advocated a woman's right to leave her husband for a lover. The incident brings Laura to the forefront. No doubt is left that she is prudish and positively cruel in the way she uses Lady Clara's children to stop her from eloping with her lover. Yet the same Laura is made to appear as a woman of piety. The handling of Laura's character in this particular situation shows that as an artist Thackeray is fully alive to the deep human interest in Lady Clara's almost desperate decision to elope with her lover. Laura's piety may be a sop to the Victorian middle class readers and the same may be said about the unhappiness coming upon Lady Clara in the wake of her elopement. But in the whole situation there is subtlety in the balancing of the artistic concern for the human elements with the social critic's responsibility of nailing down departures from the accepted social norm. This narrative, in this novel, is mainly in the first person. But the egotistic tone which the use of the first person automatically enlarges and which Thackeray exploited in *Barry Lyndon* is muted in *The Newcomes* by repeated shifts to the third-person.

Arthur Pendennis continues as the character-narrator in *The Adventures of Philip*. Thackeray thus gets a sense of freedom and convenience because there is someone else to tell the story smoothly enough, though even here he makes little effort continuously to maintain the first-person point of view. In the biographer's role Arthur has his informants and confidants to apprise him of things he does not know:

The story came to me piecemeal; from confessions here, admissions there, deductions of my own. I could not, of course, be present at many of the scenes which I shall have to relate as though I had witnessed them; and the posture, language, and inward thoughts of Philip and his friends, as here related, no doubt are fancies of the narrator in many cases . . .<sup>11</sup>

In *Henry Esmond*, written after *Pendennis*, we have the hero as the narrator. Esmond recounts his life in the third person, that is, he tells the story without appearing to do so. He might be trying to

distance himself from the experience in order to be objective in his reporting. Or he might be speaking for a party or a nation when instead of the first person singular he uses the first person plural. Thackeray, however, reminds us from time to time that the voice is unmistakably Esmond's throughout; the changeover shows little artifice. There are occasions, when Esmond's limited point of view gives way to omniscience. Here is one:

. . . that night when Father Holt arrived, and carried my Lord away with him, was the last on which Harry ever saw his patron. What happened to my Lord may be briefly told here.<sup>12</sup>

Such occasions are, however, rare. The main point of view in the novel is the limited one of Esmond himself; and how it affects the narrative may be seen in the Rachel-Esmond relationship. Esmond, as the narrator with a limited point of view, cannot describe the conduct of Rachel; he is not supposed to understand her conduct and, therefore, he must fit some adequate explanation to it. The reader is as confused as Esmond himself, for instance, when Lady Castlewood turns on him (Esmond) in rage for bringing the small-pox home:

She had never once uttered a syllable of unkindness to Harry Esmond; and her cruel words smote the poor boy, so that he stood for some moments bewildered with grief and rage at the injustice of such a stab from such a hand. He turned quite white from red, which he had been. (*Ibid.*, Bk. I, pp. 114-15)

That Rachel's anger is compounded of worry for her own children and concern for Esmond we realise only later. Esmond cannot, he is not allowed to, explore the lady's mind to find out the intensity of her love for him. He can describe a scene and report directly on Rachel's love, an actual moment in his life. The reunion in Winchester Cathedral is an appropriate example. Esmond meets Rachel; they go out into the evening, and Rachel, overwhelmed with joy, breaks down:

"Do you know what day it is?" she continued. "It is the 29th of December—it is your birthday! But last year we did not drink it—no, no. My Lord was cold, and my Harry was likely to die: and my brain was in a fever; and we had no wine. But now—now you are come again, bringing your sheaves with you, my dear." She burst into a wild

flood of weeping as she spoke; she laughed and sobbed on the young man's heart, crying out wildly, "bringing your sheaves with you—your sheaves with you!" (*Ibid.*, Bk. II, pp. 285-86)

The limited point of view concretises what Thackeray seeks to achieve. Thackeray depicts a kind of love in Rachel which grows and strengthens in hiding and is rarely expressed. Esmond's narrative, therefore, reveals Rachel and the growth of her love to the reader without Esmond being aware of it.

The narration of *The Virginians*, coming after *The Newcomes*, is partly anonymous and partly by George Warrington at a reflective rather than an active stage of his career. The technique is again one between the methods of *Vanity Fair* and *Esmond*. The rambling diary of George in the first-person covers the last few pages, beginning from Chapter LXXII of the novel. Thackeray introduces the first-person limited point of view again in *Lovel the Widower*, a short novel which came almost at the fag end of Thackeray's career. Mr. Batchelor is a participating character as well as the narrator. He is not, however, the central character of the story: "Who shall be the hero of this tale?" he begins. "Not I who write it. I am but the Chorus of the Play."<sup>13</sup> The story is Lovel's who marries the heroine and has the title role. But the point of view is Batchelor's, and with this there is a definite improvement in Thackeray's exploitation of the point of view. The fact is correctly noticed by one of the most recent critics of Thackeray. The relevant words of the critic are: "By this time tone has definitely taken precedence over narrative and, as in certain characteristic James' novel, we are in fact more interested in what does not happen to the watcher than in what does happen to the people he watches."<sup>14</sup> In *Denis Duval*, the last of Thackeray's novels, left incomplete at his death, the point of view is Denis's. He tells his own story in a good, racy, narrative style and the very materials of the tale keep it clear of the reflective disquisitions which ponderously fill many a page in Thackeray's earlier novels.

Thackeray's use of the point of view in his novels conforms to his artistic intention. He is an experimenter of the technique in his own way. We would, therefore, err if we assign to him a place among the omniscient group of writers and ignore his limited explorations in the technique of the novel. He has stumbled occasionally; but on the whole his experiments are not without merit.

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## DEATH IN EMILY BRONTE

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Death and burial were not unusual or frightful to the Bronte children. To them "death was no hushed up affair : its outward tokens resided next door, and could be visited through a gate in their own garden wall".<sup>1</sup> Their father, Patrick Bronte, was the parson of Haworth Church and the parsonage in which they lived was contiguous to the burial ground with "a multitude of grave stones, a few upright and ornate, but most of them flat and black".<sup>2</sup> To Emily, therefore, death was as natural as birth. In her own family she had seen many deaths. When she was only three she lost her mother who had been ailing for long. In 1825 her eldest sister Maria and her second elder sister Elizabeth died of consumption aged twelve and ten respectively. On the 6th of September 1842, William-Weightman, the young Curate of Mr. Bronte, a good-natured but flirtatious man with whom, it is even suggested by many of her biographers, Young Emily was in love, died of "Cholera and Peritonitis".<sup>3</sup> Martha Taylor, a friend of the Brontes, died in October of the same year after a very brief illness. Emily's aunt, Elizabeth Branwell, who had been like a mother to the Bronte children after Mrs Bronte had passed away, died on the 29th of October, of "exhaustion from constipation".<sup>4</sup> On Sunday, the 24th of September 1848, less than three months before Emily herself died, drink and drugs cut short the promising career of her only brother.

No wonder, then, that Emily was able to draw freely on her own experience in describing the numerous deaths that take place in *Wuthering Heights*. She presents death as a familiar event, without pomp or ceremony. She never sentimentalises or conventionalises. According to Lord David Cecil,

None of the other Victorians can successfully describe a death scene. Awestruck at so tremendous a task, they lose their creative nerve; their imaginations boggle and fail; and they fill up the gaps left by its absence with conventional formulas. A stagey light of false tragic emotion floods the scene; the figures become puppets, squeaking out appro-

privately touching or noble sentiments. But Emily Brontë's eagle imagination gazed with as undaunted an eye on death as on everything else.<sup>6</sup>

S. H. Steven also points out that Emily's descriptions of death-bed scenes are different from those of her contemporaries:

The death-bed scene is notoriously a favourite feature of Victorian novels—an opportunity for tearful forgiveness sentimental and more or less trite moralising.<sup>6</sup>

Emily was precociously pre-occupied with death. At the age of seven she wrote four Gondal poems on the subject. Death, especially premature death, was the rule in her novel as it was in her life. It is interesting to list the deaths in *Wuthering Heights* and the ages of those who die. Linton Heathcliff died at the age of seventeen, Frances Earnshaw before she was twenty, Catherine Linton at twenty, Hindley Earnshaw at twenty-seven, Isabella at thirty-two, even Heathcliff, whom nature had endowed with the most robust constitution, at thirty-eight, Edgar Linton at thirty-nine, and the parents of both Catherine Earnshaw and Edgar Linton in middle age. The Earnshaws and the Lintons were, like the Brontë children, short-lived. The only character in the novel who enjoys a long lease of life is Nelly Dean.

There is, again, a great similarity between the ways in which Branwell Brontë and Hindley Earnshaw ruined themselves and came to an early grave. While writing about Hindley's addiction to drink which made him ill-tempered, unsteady, friendless and penniless, Emily must have had in mind her own brother. Branwell was driven to drink and laudanum by despair. He had nursed his dying aunt and witnessed, he said, "such agonizing suffering as I would not wish my worst enemy to endure".<sup>7</sup> Only a few days earlier he had lost his friend William Weightman. These two bereavements made him lose his faith in God and he sought relief in the oblivion that alcohol and opium induced. Similarly, on the death of his young wife, Hindley

grew desperate; his sorrow was of that kind that will not lament; he neither wept nor prayed—he cursed and defied—execrated God and man gave himself to reckless dissipation.<sup>8</sup>

The mind of Hindley, was, to some extent, unhinged by his adverse fortune—like that of Branwell whose bereavements and the disappointment in his love for Mrs Robinson at whose house he had been a tutor for some time upset him completely. Branwell suffered from

hysteria and he became a victim of schizophrenia. He used to carry a carving knife, as Hindley a loaded pistol, to kill his imaginary enemy. Daphne Du Maurier remarks :

If only Emily read aloud to her brother, as she did to her sisters, the scenes in *Wuthering Heights*, which, according to Charlotte, "banished sleep by night and disturbed mental peace by day," then the identification of himself with Hindley Earnshaw was very possible.<sup>9</sup>

Emily who had been the helpless witness of the hysterical fits of her brother makes ample use of what she had seen in describing the hysterical attacks from which Catherine the elder suffered.<sup>10</sup> The deaths of both came as a relief to their relatives.

Even though Branwell died only a few months after *Wuthering Heights* was completed, she could easily have foreseen how his end would come about and how the whole household would react to it. This is very well narrated in the novel. The death of Branwell came as a great relief to his sisters who had already excluded him from their intellectual circle. A week after his death Charlotte wrote to her friend Williams of Smith, Elder and Company :

It is not permitted us to grieve for him who is gone as others grieve for those they lose. The removal of our only brother must necessarily be regarded by us rather in the light of a mercy than a chastisement.<sup>11</sup>

Like the death of Branwell, the death of Hindley in the novel, leaves all his relatives unmoved. So too the death of Catherine-Linton. Nelly Dean tells herself :

She's tainted or dead, so much the better. For better that she should be dead than lingering a burden and a misery-maker to all about her.<sup>12</sup>

The same feeling prevailed in the Brontë home during the months preceding Branwell's death.

In Emily's time consumption was an incurable disease which claimed many lives. Her own sisters Maria and Elizabeth contracted the ailment while they were at the Cowan Bridge Boarding School on account of undernourishment and they returned home only to die. Later Emily herself and her younger sister Anne became its victims. Some of the characters of *Wuthering Heights*, likewise, die of this disease. Frances Hindley suffered from the scourge for many months before



she died leaning on her husband's shoulder after "a fit of coughing—a very slight one".<sup>13</sup> Isabella and her brother Edgar Linton "died of the same thing, a kind of fever, slow at the commencement but incurable and rapidly consuming life towards the close".<sup>14</sup> Another victim of this disease was Linton Heathcliff. He had frequent fits of dreadful coughing and blood gushed out of his mouth.

Fever, then a generic term applied to widely varying ailments, was responsible for many deaths in Emily's time. Her own mother who had never been strong became an invalid after leaving six children in seven years of married life. Her illness "declared itself as internal cancer".<sup>15</sup> But she actually died of scarlet fever which she contracted from other members of the Bronte home. Similarly, in *Wuthering Heights*, Catherine who had an attack of high fever passed the disease on to her parents both of whom succumbed to it. She herself had a narrow escape, but later she contracted brain fever from which she was recovering when she died at childbirth.

The description of the affectionate manner in which Edgar Linton nursed his wife Catherine during her last illness reminds us of the way in which Mr Patrick Bronte, Emily's father, nursed Mrs Bronte. According to Nelly Dean,

No mother could have nursed an only child more devotedly than Edgar tended her. Day and night, he was watching, and patiently enduring all the annoyances that inevitable nerves and a shaken reason could inflict . . . and hour after hour he would sit beside her tracing the gradual return to bodily health.<sup>16</sup>

Similarly Hindley Earnshaw, with all his faults, doted on his wife and would not admit that she was going to die soon. He would never leave her side and her death was a very severe blow to him. Heathcliff, in his last days, received much solicitous attention from his young wife Cathy.

Emily believed that death would release man from all his miseries and open a new world of perfect happiness. In poem after poem she reiterates this view. For example, in "Faith and Despondency" she says:

But I will not fear, I will not weep  
For those whose bodies rest in sleep.  
I know there is a blessed shore  
Opening its ports for me and mine;

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I weary for that land divine  
From suffering and corruption free,  
Restored into the Deity.<sup>17</sup>

Through death alone can one reach "the eternal home, the steadfast changeless shore".<sup>18</sup>

In 'The Philosopher' Emily expresses her longing for death :

O let me die—that power and will  
Their cruel strife may close.<sup>19</sup>

In another poem without a title, dated November 1837, she says,

My only wish is to forget  
In endless sleep of death.

In "Song" she affirms,

She would not in her tranquil sleep,  
Return a single sigh!<sup>20</sup>

and in "Anticipation",

Blest had they died untried and young  
Before their hearts went wandering wrong.<sup>21</sup>

Life is only a probation on earth before death :

Thou wouldst rejoice for those that live,  
*Because* they live to die.<sup>22</sup>

In "Imagination" she speaks of a "lovelier life"<sup>23</sup> after death. It is therefore foolish to weep when someone whom you love dies :

I'll not weep that thou art going to leave me,  
There's nothing lovely here.<sup>24</sup>

She wonders why the dead who enjoyed such blessed sleep

Should cause such bitter woe.<sup>25</sup>

When she is dead, let her not be mourned for, for she would reach a safe and peaceful haven

Where tears and mourning cannot come.<sup>26</sup>

Therefore she asks,

Will I not brave the darkness of the grave  
Nay, smile to hear Death's billows rave?<sup>27</sup>

The last lines which Emily wrote are vibrant with this note of confidence :

No coward soul is mine,  
No trembler in the world's storm-troubled sphere :  
I see heaven's glories shine  
And faith shines equal, arming me from fear.<sup>28</sup>

We are reminded of Emily Dickinson's lines :

Afraid? Of whom am I afraid?  
Not Death, for who is He?  
The porter of my father's lodge  
As much abasheth me.<sup>29</sup>

Emily's hopes of a better life after death were partly at least the result of her aunt Branwell's assurance to the Bronte children whenever there was a death in the family that the deceased was safe in the arms of Jesus. She used to tell Branwell after Maria's death, "Maria is better where she is".<sup>30</sup> But although to Emily herself, as to Donne, death had no terrors, she was not unaware of the anguish of grief in which it left many of the survivors. In a few poems she calls death cruel for it snatches away from us our relations and friends and those who are in the prime of their lives. These contrasted reactions are well portrayed in *Wuthering Heights*. The deaths of Catherine and Cathy left their husbands in an agony of extreme grief, but this grief was the anguish of bereavement, the pang of separation from those who were dearest to them, not the grief over the lot of those who were dead. That death is the end of a term of sorrow and suffering and the dawn of a new era of happiness and peace, of this none of the characters seems to be in doubt.

When Mr Earnshaw who was healthy and strong died suddenly his children Hindley and Catherine comforted each other with thoughts of the bliss that was to be his in the next world. Says Nelly;

. . . no parson pictured heaven so beautifully  
as they did in their innocent talk.

And she adds :

. . . while I sobbed and listened I could not help  
wishing we were all there safe together.<sup>31</sup>

When Catherine Linton died Nelly envied her who was "incomparably beyond and above all those living," and she explained her own attitude towards death thus :

I am seldom otherwise than happy while watching in the chamber of death . . . . I see the repose that neither earth nor hill can bread ; and I feel an assurance of the endless and hereafter—the Eternity they have entered—where life is boundless in its duration and love in it's sympathy and joy in its fullness.<sup>32</sup>

Naturally, therefore, she wondered why so affectionate a husband on Edgar was so selfish as to grieve over Catherine's "blessed release".<sup>33</sup>

Lord David Cecil points out that Emily's character may regret dying, but it is only because death means a temporary separation from those with whom they feel an affinity. The dying welcome death as a gateway to a happier world.<sup>34</sup> Catherine for example, says,

. . . the thing that irks me most is this shattered prison, after all, I'm tired, tired of being enclosed here. I'm wearying to escape into that glorious world and to be always there; not seeing it dimly through tears, and yearning for it through the walls of an aching heart; but really with it and in it.<sup>35</sup>

And she tells Nelly :

Nelly, you think you are better and more fortunate than I; in full health and strength—you are sorry for me—very very soon that will be altered. I shall be sorry for you. I shall be incomparably beyond and above you all.<sup>36</sup>

The same idea is expressed by Emily in her poem "Lines" written in 1837 :

'Tis I should weep to leave thee here,  
On that dark ocean sailing drear  
With storms around and fears before  
And no kind light to point the shore.<sup>37</sup>

Edgar Linton longed to be re-united with his dead wife. His only regret in dying was to leave his daughter alone in world. Otherwise he would have preferred lying beneath the green mound of his wife's grave instead of lying on it musing about her.<sup>38</sup> Even Heathcliff, "a ghoul or vampire",<sup>39</sup> could say a few days before his death, when Nelly asked him whether he was not afraid of dying, "Afraid? No!"<sup>40</sup> His whole being was possessed with the hope and desire of a re-union with his wife—a hope that must have made the spiritual torture of his last days endurable. When young Lockwood visited the grave of Heathcliff he could not believe that one who rested in that "quiet earth" could have "unquiet slumbers".<sup>41</sup>

We do not know whether Heathcliff enjoyed peace in his grave, but he did look the picture of horror as he lay dead. As Nelly looked upon the dead body she found his "keen and fierce eyes" starting at her and she started in terror. She tried to close his eyes,

to extinguish, if possible, that frightful life—like gaze of exultation . . . . They would not shut—they seemed to sneer at my attempts, and his parted lips and sharp, white teeth sneered too.<sup>42</sup>

Greatly frightened she called the servant Joseph. But he only exclaimed,

Ech! what a wicked un' he looks grinning at death.<sup>43</sup>

Only Hindley's son Hareton had the courage to kiss the "sarcastic savage face".<sup>44</sup> Further, one dark evening Nelly met a small shepherd boy who was crying in terror. He explained that he had met Heathcliff and a lady (or their ghosts) near Wuthering Heights.<sup>45</sup> And Joseph affirmed that he had seen Heathcliff and Catherine

looking out of his (Heathcliff's) chamber window on every rainy night since his death.<sup>46</sup>

Heathcliff himself believed strongly in ghosts. Soon after Catherine's death he cried passionately :

Catherine Earnshaw, may you not rest, as long as I am living! You said I killed you—haunt me then! The murdered *do* haunt their murderers I believe—I know that ghosts *have* wandered on earth. Be with me always—take any form—drive me mad!<sup>47</sup>

Again, after the burial of Edgar Linton, speaking about Catherine,

I have a strong faith in ghosts, I have a conviction that they can and do, exist among us.<sup>48</sup>

On the evening of Catherine's burial, Heathcliff went to the churchyard and he would have broken the coffin with a spade had he not heard a sigh :

I felt that Cathy was there, not under me, but on the earth . . . . Her presence was with me, it remained while I re-filled the grave, and led me home . . . . she showed herself, as she often was in life, a devil to me.<sup>49</sup>

Her presence haunted him in many places and he saw her often as he shut his eyes, though she disappeared when he opened his eyes.<sup>50</sup> During his last days he used to stare at the spirit of Catherine,<sup>51</sup> he once said he had his eyes on it, hardly three feet away from him.<sup>52</sup> As W. A. Craik has pointed out, after the incident of Heathcliff opening the grave of Catherine, there are many allusions to the influence of the dead on the living.<sup>53</sup> Heathcliff's faith in the spirits of the dead haunting those on this side of the grave, is seen again in his threat to Nelly Dean, that unless she buried him by Catherine's side she would learn to her cost that "the dead are not annihilated".<sup>54</sup> Chapter III leaves on us the distinct impression that the ghost of Catherine haunted Wuthering Heights vainly seeking entry into the room that was hers when alive.

All this naturally raises the question whether Emily herself believed in ghosts. Some of her poems bear testimony to the fact that she was obsessed with the idea. For example in a poem without a title, written on the 10th of June 1837, she describes what she calls "the horror" she felt at the sight of a ghost one evening as she was standing by a marble tomb. Her blood curdled as she saw a shadowy thing standing by her side and gazing into her eyes.<sup>55</sup> Again, in a poem of November 1873, she complains :

Sleep brings no rest to me,  
The shadows of the dead  
My waking eyes may never see  
Surround my bed.<sup>56</sup>

To Emily burial of the dead was no extraordinary event. She must certainly have witnessed far more burials than baptisms for from her babyhood she lived close to the "grave stones leaning awry like so many disused outhouses".<sup>57</sup> She knew well all the subtle points of the last ceremony. This knowledge enabled her to describe in detail the funerals and the places of burial of some of the characters in her novel. Thus we are told that Catherine Linton who had instructed her husband that her "resting place" should not be "among the Lintons . . . under the chapel roof" but "in the open-air with a head stone"<sup>58</sup> was buried

on a green slope, in a corner of the kirkyard where the wall is so low that heath and bilberry plants have climbed over it from the moor, and peat mould buries it.<sup>59</sup>

Her husband Edgar Linton was later laid by her side and they had very simple headstones.

It is doubtful whether there is anything in English fiction to parallel the description of the unscrupulous stratagem of Heathcliff to see that he was himself buried by Catherine's side without even the side planks of their coffins to separate them. On the day after Edgar Linton's burial, Heathcliff bribed the sexton to open the grave of Catherine and remove the lid of her coffin. As he saw her face Heathcliff stood there as if spell-bound. When he was awakened by the sexton, he struck loose the side of her coffin away from Linton's side. He then instructed the sexton to bury him by her side and remove the loosened side of her coffin and the plank of his own coffin adjacent to hers so that he and she lay side by side with no barrier between them.<sup>60</sup> To make sure that his instructions were fully carried out, he took Nelly into his confidence and threatened that his ghost would punish her if she failed to see that his orders were obeyed.

In conclusion it would not be out of place to refer briefly to the manner of the death of one who had described so many deaths and burials in her novel. The illness and death of her brother in September 1848 was a terrible strain to all the Brontës. On the cold Sunday after attending his funeral service Emily caught a chill. The sharp cutting east wind had an adverse effect on her delicate health. She grew rapidly worse, with low fever, inflammation of the lungs and incessant cough.<sup>61</sup> Even then she refused to take any medicine or allow a doctor to be called in.<sup>62</sup> When it was found that her permanent pulse-rate was 110, she would not allow it to be taken again.<sup>63</sup> Till the very end she would insist on getting out of bed and doing her share of the household work and even attending to the domestic pets. On the day she died, 19 December 1848, she got up as usual, and combed her long hair with her weak fingers. But the comb fell into the fire and was burnt. She tottered down the stairs and had her breakfast. She took up some sewing, but her hands fell on her lap.<sup>64</sup> As though with a presentiment of her imminent death she said, "You can send for a doctor now, if you like"<sup>65</sup> Charlotte and Anne tried to take her upstairs, but she cried, "No, No!" and died a little later.<sup>66</sup> Perhaps the best commentary on her death is her own last poem, "No coward soul is mine," (found perhaps in her rosewood box, by Charlotte after her death)—that "too bold dying song" which shook the soul of Matthew Arnold "like a clarion-blast".<sup>67</sup>

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## JAMES JOYCE'S PASSAGE TO INDIA

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S. K. AITHAL

IN *Ulysses* James Joyce makes constant allusions to other countries, cultures, and times, and thus gives his novel a universal significance almost at every point. There are, for example, striking parallels between Leopold Bloom, on the one hand, and God, the Father, Moses, Elijah, Jesus, Odysseus, the elder Hamlet, a Christian, a Jew, on the other. These allusions are primarily to the cultures and literatures of the European continent. But there are also attempts to reach out to the larger world. The numerous references made in the novel to Indian thought broaden its base and enhance its significance.

Although the allusions in *Ulysses* have been quite a favourite subject with critics, the Indian element in the novel has received little sympathetic attention. One finds instead a few negative remarks suggesting that Joyce did not think much of Indian thought. Stanislaus Joyce and William Powell Jones, for example, are of the view that Joyce's interest in Indian philosophy was negative. Stanislaus writes that Joyce's serious interest in theosophy, a popular philosophy of the time in Dublin which drew its inspiration mainly from Hindu philosophy and religion, lapsed quickly as he was temperamentally "not the kind of man to find his heart's ease amid a murmur of mystics".<sup>1</sup> Jones states that Joyce satirises the Hindu mysticism fad in Dublin and puts its followers into scorn.<sup>2</sup> But Joyce's novel gives an opposite impression. Further, Joyce has also clearly stated, in answer to his brother's question why he is pottering about with the misty mystics, "They interest me . . . . In my opinion, they are writing about a very real spiritual experience you can't appreciate . . . . And they write about it . . . with a subtlety that I don't find in many so-called psychological novels".<sup>3</sup> Though somewhat inaccurate in some of his allusions, Joyce shows quite an extensive knowledge of Indian thought. In what follows I will try to point out Indian references and parallel structures of thought to show that there is yet another unexplored dimension of the novel worth consideration.

What were Joyce's sources of Indian thought? Toward the end of the 1880s and in the 1890s there was in Dublin a widespread interest in the philosophy and mysticism of the East, especially of India. The Hermetic Society, founded in 1885 which became the Theosophical Society the next year, had, as one of its objectives, the promotion of the study of Indian religions and philosophy.<sup>4</sup> A monthly magazine called *The Irish Theosophist* was started in 1892 as an organ of the society.

Such an enthusiasm among intellectuals of Dublin in Indian thought and culture could not have failed to evoke some interest in Joyce. Indeed he was said to have been present at several meetings of the Theosophical Society. He seems to have further given an impression to A.E., one of the spokesmen of the Society, that he was interested in enrolling himself as a member, which he never, however, did. Stanislaus Joyce admits that his brother did "toy with theosophy as a kind of interim religion" and informs us that he read with serious interest expository works on theosophy by Madame Blavatsky, Colonel Olcott, Annie Besant, and Leadbeater.<sup>5</sup> *Ulysses* contains many references to the theosophists and their works, and we can safely assume from external and internal evidence that they were Joyce's main sources of Indian philosophy. Weldon Thornton writes, "Almost all of the theosophical lore in *Ulysses* seems to derive either from Mme Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled* or from A.P. Sinnet's *Esoteric Buddhism*."<sup>6</sup>

The Hindu doctrines of reincarnation and Karma, which are incidentally the central beliefs underlying the Gospel of Universal Brotherhood of the theosophists, are found everywhere in *Ulysses*.<sup>7</sup> Molly's question on metempsychosis, her phonetic interpretation of the word, and her exclamation at Bloom's "learned" definition of the word keep coming back to Bloom's mind during the course of the day. To quote one such instance: "Karma they call that transmigration for sins you did in a past life the reincarnation met him pikehoses."<sup>8</sup> Stephen's thoughts also turn to the subject. He is of the view that "The life esoteric is not for ordinary person. O. P. must work off bad Karma first" (p. 185). In one place Joyce uses the Sanskrit *punarjanam* to refer to this idea of rebirth (p. 510).

Several allusions to the Buddha can be found in the novel. The thought of the Buddha crosses the minds of all the three central characters: Stephen, Bloom, and Molly. In the nightmare scene of Circe, egotistic Stephen is told by Elijah, "You have that something

within, the higher self. You can rub shoulders with a Jesus, a Gautama, an Ingersoll' (p. 508). Bloom recalls, "Buddha their god lying on his side in the museum. Taking it easy with hand under his cheek" (p. 80). We come to know of Bloom's humble and silent imitation of the Buddha from Molly's monologue : "look at the way hes sleeping at the foot of the bed how can he without a hard bolster its well he doesnt kick or he might knock out all my teeth breathing with his hand on his nose like that Indian god he took me to show one wet Sunday in the museum in Kildare street all yellow in a pinafore lying on his side on his hand with his ten toes sticking out that he said was a bigger religion than the Jews and Our Lords both put together all over Asia imitating him as hes always imitating everybody" (p. 771). To be coldly factual here, the Buddha's image Bloom and Molly are visualising in the reclining position is the one where he is shown in the state of death—*parinirvana* or total extinction as is known. He is not taking it easy with hand under his cheek as Bloom assumes. Molly must be also making a mistake in attributing the breathing posture to the Buddha from some other Indian god as no image of the Buddha exists with hand on nose. It is interesting to note that intellectual Stephen also makes a distortion of the Buddha. Once he visualises "Buddh under a plantain" (p. 192), when probably he is thinking of the Buddha who received enlightenment under the *pipal* or *Bo* tree. The inaccuracies are of no consequence. What is important is that we are invited to compare Stephen and Bloom with the Buddha just as we have been called upon to see correspondence between them and the heroes and saints of the Western legends and literature.

In the passage which describes the exchange between Paddy Dignam and his friends, Joyce shows close familiarity with occult *tantric* terminology and belief (pp. 301-302). According to *tantric* philosophy it is possible to come into contact with the dead in spiritualistic séances. *Tantras* are magical techniques with which such a meeting is effected. "Etheric double" is the exact invisible counterpart of the physical body emitting *Jivic* (of life) rays which a man usually shakes off within hours when he dies, but there are some who, too much involved with the affairs of the world, cannot get rid of it and suffer great torture, as does Paddy Dignam. "Astral level" is the plane to which a man rises from the physical after death. Man has to rise above this level for the soul or *atmic* development and for volupcy. Such men who reach this plane known as *devanic* circle are called "adepts," and they can know the coming events in the world of *Maya* or illusion. Joyce makes use of all this occult lore in the

passage. The tone is here comic, as it is almost throughout the novel, and not scornful as W. P. Jones interprets.

Besides making use of the larger Indian motifs and themes, Joyce sprinkles over the text Indian words and phrases, which further accentuate the Indian dimension of the novel. We have already referred to the words *tantras*, *jivic*, *atmic*, *devanic*, *Karma* and *punar-janam*. Other examples are *akasic* (of sky), *mahamanvantara* (a period which equals 4,320,000 years), *pralaya* (deluge, and not return, as Joyce defines it), *mahamahatma* (great soul), Shiva (god of destruction), Shakti (goddess of energy; Shiva's consort), *yon*i (female organ), and *lingam* (male organ). Words like *yogi* and *juggernaut* have, of course, become part of the English language. When Joyce uses these words, he exposes their meanings explicitly or implicitly in the context.

Apart from these Indian sources, there are many things in the novel which sound very Indian. The everchanging and shifting surface of life in the novel goes well with the Indian outlook of life as an illusion or *Maya*. The significance attached to things big and small, animate and inanimate, deeply appeals to an Indian. The intermingling of countries, cultures, and times creating a sense of unity of life makes an Indian feel at home in the world of *Ulysses*. Bloom's search for a son is very meaningful from the Indian point of view. The possession of a son is held to be absolutely essential to a man's salvation, and according to traditional derivation a *putra* is a deliverer from hell, since a man without a *putra* or son is consigned to hell, called *put*. If a man has no son, he must adopt one to achieve salvation. The paths Stephen, Bloom, and Molly follow in their lives are, broadly speaking, similar to the three different ways suggested by Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* for the realization of God. Stephen's approach could be characterized as *Jnana yoga*, which aims at attainment of Godhead through intellect. Bloom's path of action could be described as *Karma yoga*. Molly follows the path of devotion and surrender—*Bhakti yoga*. Though one cannot demonstrate that Joyce wrote with these analogies in mind, no one acquainted with Indian thought can fail to observe the similarities.

The direct allusions and the striking analogies elucidated above should be acknowledged and pondered by every serious reader of *Ulysses*; he will thus enrich his appreciation of Joyce's effort to achieve real universality in the novel.

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## THE NOVELIST'S VISION IN *A PASSAGE TO INDIA*

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CHITRA ROY

FORSTER'S last novel is undoubtedly his greatest. To the experience of years is added an eventful decade when he visited India twice and lived through the nightmarish war of 1914-1918, posted at Egypt on non-combatant service. It is this varied and complex experience of alien cultures, and of uncertain living during a cataclysmic war, that makes his probe of the area he investigates so penetrating, and his final statement on life in the novel form so remarkable.

*A Passage to India* was first conceived after his visit to the country in 1912-13. But Forster did not get on to the writing of the novel immediately after the visit. A distancing of time, as also of place, was required<sup>1</sup>. The war too was an interruption. Perhaps he felt that his Indian experience was not yet complete. If we mark the dates of the entries in the journal which he kept at the time<sup>2</sup>, we find that Forster's Indian tour ended in April, 1913, after a visit to the Ellora caves. The visit to the Marabar caves, coming midway in the novel, occurs in summer. Forster had spent six or seven months in the country and was leaving in April, certainly the cruellest month in India. It was too short a stay and too unkind a weather, to put to rest uncertainties and anxieties lurking in the mind, and to settle problems that had posed during the trip. The chance to complete the year with the monsoons, the best season in India, by another six months' stay, came in 1921. Forster was offered service in the native state of Dewas Senior, under the Maharajah whose acquaintance he had already made during his first visit.<sup>3</sup> Now he could level the rough edges of his Indian experience, and could visualise a complete novel. Presumably, in 1922 he sat down to write his novel.

The title of the novel, as we know, is borrowed from a poem of Whitman's. The occasion of the poem was the laying of the Atlantic cable in 1866, and the joining of the Union Pacific track with the

Central Pacific in the U.S.A. Whitman celebrates this connecting of distant parts and the opening up of the world. He is inspired by a vision of world unity which the Indian peninsula seemed to symbolise, and hence the title. That vision of world unity is the subject of Forster's novel also, and the writer examines its validity in the light of contemporary events.

The passage to India is undertaken in the novel by three English people and one Indian. Of these, Adela Quested and Cyril Fielding are rationally inclined, Mrs. Moore is of a mystic temperament, and Aziz the Indian tends to be emotional. Adela Quested who resembles Margaret Schlegel of an earlier novel, along with Cyril Fielding, is the product of contemporary British liberal education. A cautious girl, she has come to study her fiancé Ronny Heaslop, a British official, in his proper work environment. Cyril Fielding is the principal of the local Government college. Mrs. Moore is Ronny Heaslop's mother. She has left behind in England her two children by her second marriage, to accompany Adela, and to settle her and Ronny in their new life. Aziz is a Muslim doctor in the government hospital. He is a widower with three children, who are looked after by their maternal grandmother in a different city. All four characters are taken on an intensive, psychological as well as metaphysical exploration of the country. At the exclusive Chandrapore club, Adela, a newcomer, expresses the wish to see the 'real' India. From then onward, she and the others are landed in situations which reveal not a unified India, but a puzzling variety of Indias. One is uncertain as to which is real, which the false. The reactions of characters during this passage and their interaction provide an interesting plot.

'Mosque' opens with Mrs. Moore and Aziz striking up a friendship in the romantic moonlit setting of the Chandrapore mosque. Aziz is disgusted with the usual set of Anglo-Indians at Chandrapore. But through Mrs. Moore he comes to know and appreciate the other set, Cyril Fielding and Adela Quested. At Fielding's tea party all these people and Prof Godbole, a Hindu Brahmin and Fielding's colleague at the local college, meet. In summer, Aziz arranges a sightseeing for all at the Marabar caves. But this ends in disaster. Fielding and Godbole miss the train. Mrs. Moore is overcome by heat. Adela believes herself to have been assaulted by Aziz in one of the caves. Aziz is imprisoned and tried. Mrs. Moore, a witness hostile to the Anglo-Indians, is bundled out of the country. On the boat she dies of sunstroke. Adela, on the day of the trial, declares Aziz to be innocent and the trial ends in a fiasco. Adela, after this,



is deserted by both Indians and Anglo-Indians. Fielding, admiring her honesty, shelters the helpless girl stranded in an alien country. He asks Aziz to forego the heavy compensation the court had awarded him. Aziz in a moment of impulse agrees. Later, however, provoked by gossip, he comes to believe that his English friend had been practicing duplicity. When Fielding follows Adela to England, Aziz believes his suspicions that Fielding would marry Adela and get hold of the compensation money, are confirmed. Fielding marries Stella, Mrs. Moore's daughter, to whom he had been introduced by Adela. He returns to India, accompanied by his wife and her brother, Ralph. Invited by his old colleague Godbole, he visits Mau, a native state where Aziz is in residence. While all are observing the Gokul Ashtami ceremony, the biggest state festival, misunderstanding between friends is cleared up and they are reconciled.

Within the above framework, issues that had held Forster's attention in the earlier novels are, once again, taken up. Outstanding among these are themes of continuance and the growth of the personality. The two issues are linked up and the author suggests that marriage and parenthood are experiences needed for full emotional development, that is for full growth of the personality.

The importance of the continuance theme to Forster can be gauged from the way he introduces it in the very second chapter. Aziz, invited to dine at Hamidullah's house, is admonished by the Begum, the Indian matriarch behind the purdah, for not marrying a second time. The Begum wonders what would become of the daughters if the men refuse to marry :

Wedlock, motherhood, power in the house . . . . for what else is she born, and how can the man who had denied them to her stand up to face her creator and his own at the last day? (Everyman, Dent, 1942, 1961 reprint, p. 7)

Aziz himself, in a later chapter, harangues Fielding on this same issue. He asks Fielding why he has remained a bachelor, and he worries more about Fielding being childless than about actual marriage

But you haven't children.

None.

Excuse the following question : have you any illegitimate children?

No. I'd willingly tell you if I had.

Then your name will entirely die out.

It must.

Well. He shook his head. This indifference is what the Oriental will never understand.

I don't care for children.

Caring has nothing to do with it, he said impatiently. (p. 100)

Two characters are the major exponents of the continuance theme in the last novel. One is the twice-married and happily married Mrs. Moore, and the other is Aziz, a widower. They have the same number of children for whose well-being they are urgently concerned. The Demeter symbol, which in Forster's opinion, cuts across sex<sup>4</sup>, is revived in both. Mrs. Moore is in the tradition of fulfilled motherhood, embodied in such mother-figures as Lillia Herriot (WA), Mrs. Elliot (LJ), Mrs. Honeychurch (RV), Ruth Wilcox (HE) and Helen Schlegel (HE). Aziz continues the tradition of Gino (WA) and Stephen Wonham (LJ), Mr. Emerson (RV) and Henry Wilcox (HE), the responsible father-figures. All through the novel parental responsibilities are stressed, specially in the person of Mrs. Moore. Mrs. Moore finds nothing wrong in Mrs. McBryde deserting her husband in summer to take her children to live more comfortably in the hills. Children, she believed, should be the first consideration of parents till they are grown up and married. Only then one has the right to live for oneself (p. 115). She is anxious to see Ronny, her first-born, happily settled in life with Adela, the reason why she had come to India. But she is also anxious to return to her duties to her younger and more vulnerable children in England. Her impatience with Ronny and Adela issues from this. Their procrastination keeps her away from her duties. Having exposed herself boldly to the attendant risks of two marriages, the younger people's caution is simply incomprehensible to her. But even in her bitterness she is aware of her duty :

When I have seen you and Ronny married, and seen the other two (Ralph and Stella) and whether they want to be married I'll retire then into a cave of mine own. (p. 173)

A cave here presumably symbolises detachment or non-involvement, the stage of *sannyasa* or renunciation.

Anxiety about Ralph and Stella frequently surfaces in Mrs. Moore's dreams. Ronny and Adela wake her up from one to announce their engagement. On the train to Marabar she dreams that her younger children were wanting something, and she was complaining that she could not be with two families at the same time. Her motherly instincts are appreciated by at least two people. Aziz shows his appreciation when he promises to be kind to Ralph and

Stella, should they ever meet; and Adela, when she realises on her return to England, that the only way she could pay back Mrs. Moore's kindness was by taking upon herself Mrs. Moore's unfulfilled parental duties to the younger children (p. 231). Ronny's mother, Adela felt, had died of the strain of discharging her duty to Ronny and herself. So Adela repays an obligation to a departed soul much as Stephen Wonham had repaid Rickie's (LJ).

Mrs. Moore's major disappointments in India are her son and Adela. While she sympathises with Adela's antipathy to the colonial set, she alone guesses that this is not the real reason of her refusal to marry Ronny. Adela is involved in self-deception over marriage as Lucy Honeychurch (RV) had been, but for different reasons. Adela's uneasiness rises from a fundamental aversion to love, itself and marriage. It is the expression of her basic celibate instinct. Mrs. Moore is upset by the girl's unconscious insincerity in wanting to camouflage this aversion with an intellectual posture. The first divination comes at Fielding's party, where Adela abruptly announces that she had no intention to stop in India. This implied that she had no intention to marry either. Adela could have given up the intellectual pose at this point. But she prefers to bicker with Ronny in the carriage on the way back from the party, and Mrs. Moore really loses her temper. Simultaneously, she starts to lose interest in all young people and in marriage generally. She grows cynical, and not even when the couple formally announce their re-engagement, can she pull herself up to be cheerful. Underneath she senses their dishonesty, and that the whole thing was a patched up affair. Her cynicism gathers momentum till it concentrates, focuses and explodes inside the cave that symbolises the celibate instinct and emotional sterility. Mrs. Moore's nightmare inside the cave denotes the temporary defeat of Demeter at the hands of anti-continuance forces. Mrs. Moore's submission to these forces is expressed in numerous cynical remarks uttered on the way to the caves and later :

I have listened too much. It is time I was left in peace...  
.....I'll retire then into a cave of my own. Somewhere  
where no young people will come asking questions and ex-  
pecting answers. Some shelf. (p. 173)

.....Why all this marriage, marriage? ....The human race  
would have become a single person centuries ago if marriage  
was any use... (p. 177)

She had brought Ronny and Adela together by their mutual  
wish, but really could not advise them further. She felt

increasingly (vision or nightmare) that, though people are important, the relations between them are not and that in particular too much fuss has been made over marriage; centuries of carnal embracement, yet man is no nearer to understanding man. (p. 116)

Mrs. Moore's bitterest disappointment is her son. Freshness of perception which is the hallmark of youth and which enlivens her, even in her old age, grows dimmer in Ronny Heaslop, who approximates Forster's standard portrait of the average English middle class youth.<sup>5</sup> Ronny Heaslop who has predecessors in Gerald Dawes (LJ), Tilliard (LJ), Charles and Paul Wilcox (HE), aspires to be a colonial 'pukka-sahib'. The veneer of liberalism acquired during undergraduate days when he fell in love with Adela, wears off fast under the colonial grind. *Cousin Kate*, a play he had ridiculed in England, is applauded in India, because the company is Anglo-Indian. His mother's alluding to his playing the viola is discouraged, because the fine arts are bad form in India. But what alarms Mrs. Moore most is Ronny's conscious hypocrisy regarding so called British justice in India. Justice proceeding from the basic premise that all Indians are subhuman and criminals, is never fair. It consists of punishment only, and is a travesty of the real thing, as is proved during Aziz's trial. Prior to that and in anticipation, mother and son have bitter arguments on this point on two occasions. When Ronny tears Aziz to pieces, his mother sadly remarks that he never used to judge people like this at home (pp. 24-25). Later she retorts that British administrators like Ronny were usurping the role of God in India (pp. 34-41). The only justification of British presence in India could be humanistic. In God's earth, of which India is a part, it is the duty of Englishmen to behave with decency and humanity. Where Ronny would have his mother exclude Aziz from her circle of acquaintances, Mrs. Moore, a truer Christian than the missionaries Mr. Sorley and Mr. Graysford, is reluctant to dislodge even a tiny wasp that had taken refuge on her clothespeg.

If the Demeter in Mrs. Moore has lost a child in Ronny, she has recovered a Persephone in Aziz. Mrs. Moore's alienation from her son roughly coincides with her attachment to Aziz. The void created in the mother's heart by an errant son is filled by Aziz who has more features in common with her than Ronny has with his mother. Aziz is impulsive as Mrs. Moore must have been in her youth, as is indicated by her two marriages. Where Ronny and his mother have only differences whenever they come together, leading one to obduracy and the other to despair, Aziz and Mrs. Moore warm up to each

other the instant they meet. The sympathy and understanding the mother is ready to offer her son, because spurned by him, is now extended to an alien. Ronny demands uncritical approval of all his actions and of British imperialism; Aziz asks for kindness only. Sitting together at the entrance of the mosque during their first meeting, Aziz and Mrs. Moore share laughs and exchange views. When confidence has been established Aziz pours into the sympathetic ears of his friend the story of the rankling humiliation he had suffered at the hands of the Callendars. As Ruth Wilcox had soothed ruffled tempers, her successor, on her very first appearance, is a balm to Aziz's jagged nerves. When 'the flame that not even beauty can nourish' (p. 15), the kinship that outlasts death, springs up, not all Ronny's endeavours or those of the other Anglo-Indians can extinguish it in the heart of the old lady. To the end she firmly asserts her liking for the young man. 'I like Aziz, Aziz is my real friend', she interposes in the middle of her son's long invective against the native character (p. 80). No amount of specious argument could tone down the glaring contrast between the cold inhumanity of British justice that Ronny her son exemplifies, and the tenderness of Aziz's nostalgic vision of Alamgir's court where justice had implied warm generosity. Of course it is a biased vision, but that is quite immaterial here. What is important is that Aziz's precept of 'kindness, more kindness, and even after that more kindness' (p. 98), conforms to Mrs. Moore's own Christian exhortation to her son, 'Goodwill and more goodwill and more goodwill' (p. 41). For a moment we arrive at a consanguinity of religious views Forster wished us to glimpse at. Repressed by Ronny's recalcitrance and Adela's priggishness, Mrs. Moore turns to Aziz and lavishes all her motherly affection on him. When Aziz is in tears because Fielding has missed the train to Marabar, she consoles him with words she knows would touch the core of his heart: 'We shall all be Moslems together now, as you promised' (p. 112). To please Aziz and Adela, despite the heat and her own fatigue, she readily accepts the invitation to visit the caves, and endures Aziz's officious hospitality all through. Even after her experience in the caves, she continues to smile bravely because the young people seemed to enjoy their visit. When Aziz is arrested, she wakes up from her apathy to declare resolutely her faith in her friend and refuses categorically to give evidence against him. Mrs. Moore's belief in Aziz's innocence is intuitive as she explains to her skeptical son, 'I felt it isn't the sort of thing he would do' (p. 178). Ruth Wilcox(HE) and Mrs. Honeychurch(RV) had shown similar understanding when they had tackled the difficulties of their children. Such understanding springs from one's basic

humanity and traditional wisdom inherited from and tested by earlier generations. These repose naturally in elderly and maternal figures such as Mrs. Moore.

Mrs. Moore's wisdom and love are derived from the tradition Mrs. Moore is rooted in. That tradition is the Christian creed of the New Testament. The first Epistle of John declares that 'God is love', and that love brings recognition of truth. Mrs. Moore's guiding principles are derived from this creed which was also that of her ancestors. She was brought up, like her forefathers, within this living tradition of Christianity. Fielding and Adela, like Forster, had been trained to think within the comparatively newer framework of rational philosophy and fairminded justice. It is the invocation of Christian mercy that induces clarity in Adela in the courtroom. Adela's customary sense of justice would have remained paralysed had not the invocation of Mrs. Moore's principle of love revitalised it.

Mrs. Moore's wisdom and love are thus pervasive influences that continue after her death. While Romney and his world are left out of its orbit of influence because they reject the spirit, Aziz and others are drawn into it. The chain reaction of benevolent happenings that wipe out all traces of the Marabar evil will be detailed later. What we should notice at this stage is how the supernatural, so unavoidable in any Forster novel, is seen to operate here as a necessary corollary of the continuance theme. There is at least one reference to the overtly supernatural when the accident on the Marabar road is attributed to a ghost by both Mrs. Moore and the Nawab Bahadur. But elsewhere the supernatural is only a framework for Forster's particular theory of vicarious immortality or continuance.<sup>6</sup> Citing the specific instance of Mrs. Moore, Trilling tells us that Mrs. Moore's action, somehow has a good echo, and her children are her further echo. She lives imaginatively in the lives of others.<sup>7</sup> The travesty of her name into that of a Hindu deity, the building of tombs and the creation of legends, revolt the rational Englishman, who tended to forget :

. . . That a hundred years ago, when Europeans still made their home in the countryside and appealed to its imagination, they occasionally became local demons after death . . . not a whole god, perhaps, but part of one, adding an epithet or gesture to what already existed, just as the gods contribute to the great gods, and they to the philosophic Brahm. (p. 223)

Fielding's cynical rationalisation is nearer the mark in explaining the supernatural from the continuance angle :

I only meant it is difficult, as we get on in life, to resist the supernatural . . . . but what a temptation at forty five, to pretend that the dead live again ; One's own dead, no one else's matter. (p. 209)

A thematic polarisation of characters helps us to understand Forster's views on continuance. Fielding and Adela represent, as mentioned before, the comparatively modern and rationalist view of life, which is not free from occasional intellectual black outs (pp. 207-210, 227-230). Aziz and Mrs. Moore rooted in their religion, are the exponents of the continuance theme. Aziz, generous and impulsive, is eminently suited for this role. The Demeter myth often transcending sex in the Forster novels, is manifest in Aziz. In the first novel, Gino more than Lilia, had exhibited a blind instinctive adoration for his child, even before its birth.<sup>8</sup> Hence, the intensity of Gino's suffering when his child dies. It is Mr. Failing who undertakes the responsibility of dead parents to rear up Stephen. Henry Wilcox is a ruthless, exploiting capitalist just for the sake of his children, whose future he wishes to secure. Aziz skimps and scrapes and sends the whole of his salary to his mother-in-law so that his children will live in comfort. The continuance theme is fully developed when, in the last section, his children join him at Mau. In happy and relaxed circumstances, Aziz can once more assume full parental responsibilities, as Mrs. Moore, his friend, would have liked him to. Maurice's yearning in Forster's posthumous novel expresses the intense relevance of the subject for Forster.<sup>9</sup>

The emotionally incapacitated intellectuals, Adela and Fielding, like their predecessors Philip(WA), Rickie(LJ), Ansell(LJ), Cecil(RV), Margaret and Tibby(HE), are ill equipped to cope with the demands of marriage and parenthood. Margaret makes a good wife, but is unwilling to undertake the consequent obligations of motherhood, a task she leaves to her sister. While Mrs. Moore believes that 'marriage makes most things right enough' (p. 82), Adela continues to have misgiving about her future life with Ronny. Finally, like the earlier heroes and Charlotte Bartlett(RV), she joins the 'army of the benighted'. Ansell and Tibby are confirmed bachelors. So is Fielding, and his cynicism is expressed in this manner :

Marriage is too absurd in any case. It begins and continues for such very slight reasons. The social business props it

up on one side, and the theological business on the other, but neither of them are marriage, are they? . . . About marriage I am cynical. (p. 228)

The feeling of inadequacy generated in the coldly intellectual Fielding, when he comes in contact with an emotionally fulfilled Aziz, is pathetic indeed, as is shown in the early stages of their friendship:

Experience can do much, and all that he had learnt in England and Europe was an assistance to him, and helped him towards clarity; but clarity prevented him from experiencing something else! (p. 99)

The 'something else', plainly is love finding fulfilment in marriage and parenthood. To Fielding this fulfilment comes late in life thanks to Adela, who tries to save him from the fate that overtook her. But Fielding marries as an afterthought, and his marriage threatens to be incompatible like Rickie's. Not only is there the difference in age, temperaments differ also. But when Fielding confesses his difficulties to Aziz (p. 278), his friend, who like Mrs. Moore has had an untroubled conjugal life, reacts in the same manner as Mr. Moore had reacted to Adela's uncertainties. He sees no problem at all.

The curse of excessive cerebration dogs Fielding and Adela at every step of their lives. They view objects, events and ideas through the all too clear light of rational intelligence. The sympathy and tolerance that are invested in their attitude to life are born of cool reason and cold justice. These are the qualities that allow Margaret to plead for both the haves and have-nots, the Wilcoxes and the Basts, where the more impulsive Helen throws caution and the Wilcoxes to the winds. It is fairmindedness again that leads Adela to recant in the courtroom. Fielding, himself a product of the rational and liberal school, cannot help admiring such courage and honesty in a person he had, a short while ago, found unattractive (p. 100). Accordingly, he sets to measure Adela's and Mrs. Moore's kindness in the balance, and finds Mrs. Moore wanting. Aziz's angry retort is the right answer to such an attitude;

Is emotion a sack of potatoes, so much the pound, to be measured out? Am I a machine? I shall be told I can use up my emotions by using them next . . .

. . . . .

If you are right, there is no point in any friendship; it all comes down to give and take, or give and return, which is disgusting . . . (p. 221)



What Fielding does not comprehend is that Aziz's unfairness is a necessary corollary of his emotional involvement. Lacking it himself, and wanting to travel light like an Indian saddhu (p. 102), Fielding is not in a position to understand this. When Mrs. Moore tells Aziz that she does not understand people very well, and she only knows whether she likes or dislikes them (p. 15), she is echoing Aziz's own manner of direct and uncomplicated, if partisan, response to life. This is opposed to the fruitless cerebration implied in Adela's query to Fielding: 'If one doesn't worry, how's one to understand?' (p. 56) or Adela's schoolroom manner severely censured by Fielding:

She goes on and on as if she's at a lecture . . . trying ever so hard to understand India and life, and occasionally taking a note. (pp. 100-101)

or, better in Adela's propensity for plans (p. 116). Adela plans, worries, plans, questions repeatedly events, ideas, objects and people she comes across, such as the green bird on top of the tree she and Ronny sit under, to discuss their marriage, the unknown animal that hits the Nawab Bahadur's car, Mrs. Moore's and her own future itinerary in India, the snake that her field glasses reveal to be a withered tree stump. The process wearies her, and her whole Indian sojourn becomes a whirl of questions and plans that run riot inside the Marabar cave, lashes into fury her subconscious, which avenges itself on her rationally calm existence.

Plans and debates, questions and answers, are part of the rational machinery which, the liberal intellectual hopes, would help him to tear off the veil of hypocrisy in an alien country, and to arrive at the truth. Hypocrisy is the Westerner's bugbear as suspicion is the Indian's, remarks Forster towards the end of the novel (p. 243). The liberal Englishman has to fight it constantly in the colonial administrator, and ironically in himself. Colonial officials like Ronny are guilty of hypocrisy when they complacently justify imperialist designs. But they fool none, least of all their enlightened compatriots, who in Ronny's case happens to be his mother. Mrs. Moore tells him straight to his face that his sentiments were those of a god, and Englishmen in India liked posing as gods. To parry such specious arguments, honesty and a sense of justice issuing from it, are the forte of the enlightened intellectual, as humanism is that of Mrs. Moore.

The more insidious pressure on the intellectual comes from himself. This happens, when in a complacent mood, he like Adela, starts to deceive himself about the important issues of life. Adela's

career in India is marked by several such moral lapses. In the first place her desire to see India contained, as Fielding detected, 'a factitious element' (p. 72). The moment she breaks off her engagement, this desire decreases. The malady is diagnosed by Fielding, when Adela attempts to write a moving letter of apology to Aziz, and fails :

Our letter is a failure for a simple reason which we had better face : you have no real affection for Aziz, or Indians generally. . . . . The first time I saw you, you were wanting to see India, not Indians, and it occurred to me : Ah, that won't take us far . . . (p. 225)

Adela's most serious lapse is with regard to her own projected marriage. At Fielding's party, affected by the atmosphere of informality, she announces what had been dormant in her subconscious all along, that she did not intend to stop in India, which indirectly meant that she did not intend to marry Ronny. The surfacing of this subconscious knowledge precipitates Adela's cancellation of her engagement. The accident on the Marabar road, however, traps her once again. Encouraged by false symptoms, Adela lulls her doubts, and is engaged to Ronny again. She is about to commit the same mistake of an incompatible marriage and an uncongenial state of existence as marriage, as Forster's earlier heroes and heroines had. Adela is not completely unaware of the gross self-deception she is practising on herself, as is evident from doubts returning the moment she gives Ronny her word (p. 78), or her insistent attempts to reassure Mrs. Moore of her honesty :

You heard me tell Aziz and Godbole I wasn't stopping in their country. I didn't mean it, so why did I say it? I feel I haven't been. . . . . frank enough, attentive enough, or something. It's as if I got everything out of proportion. You have been so very good to me, and I meant to be good when I sailed, but somehow I haven't been. . . Mrs. Moore, if one isn't absolutely honest what is the use of existing? (p. 82)

For Adela, groping and seeking guidance here, the crisis of conscience has set in.

The longer Adela stayed in the country, cut off from the soil that nurtured rationalism in her, the more numerous are her moral slips. Though not really interested in seeing India and Indians, she yet accepts Aziz's invitation to visit the caves. Through the increasing heat she suppresses her growing indifference to her surroundings, and is increasingly polite and amiable to her Indian host. As she journeys,

she vociferously plans her own and her future mother-in-law's lives. Plans, in fact, helped Adela to bottle up her fears and anxieties that had never left her since she had got engaged officially. The climax comes when she notices a double row of footholds nicked on the rock, on the way to the second cave. It reminds her of the pattern traced in the dust by the wheels of the Nawab Bahadur's car on her fateful day of the accident. In the all too clear daylight, the significance of what had happened on the dark night, when darkness had helped to obscure intellectual clarity, becomes plain to Adela. She discovers that she and Ronny had never loved each other :

There was esteem and animal contact at dusk, but emotion that links them was absent. (p. 131)

With the terrible discovery Adela loses her bearings :

She felt like a mountaineer whose rope had broken. Not to love the man one's going to marry! Not to find it out till this moment! Not even to have asked oneself the question until now! (p. 131)

As it would inconvenience so many people, Adela decides not to break off with Ronny, and thereby adds to her problems. She practises self-deception again. Speciously she tries to convince herself that love is not always necessary for successful union. With her mind on marriage, she turns to Aziz by her side, and wonders about his marriage. She commits a fault of taste when in her abrupt insensitive fashion, she asks Aziz how many wives he had. The questions show the trend of her thought at the time. In the first place Adela is equating love and marriage with carnality. In the second place she is attributing carnality to Aziz, simply because he happened to be a handsome Moslem. Instigated by her colonial friends she argues that her question on marriage had roused the carnal instinct in Aziz. Ultimately, Adela is guilty of the same crude racial and social prejudices as the Anglo-Indians, and the rational machinery completely fails her. The critical selfappraisal on the eve of her fateful pronouncement of Aziz's innocence brings this out clearly :

... her disaster in the cave was connected, though by a thread, with another part of her life, her engagement to Ronny. She had thought of love just before she went in, and had innocently asked Aziz what marriage was like, and she supposed that her question had roused evil in him. To recount this would have been incredibly painful, it was the

one point she wanted to keep obscure; she was willing to give details that would have distressed other girls, but this story of her private failure she dared not allude to, and she dreaded being examined in public in case something came out (p. 197)

Fielding's and Adela's retrospective attempt at a rational analysis of the Marabar episode is self-defeating. In the first place, Adela continues to hide the truth from Fielding, although she faces it herself now. So when Fielding fruitlessly explores three or four possible explanations of the Marabar episode and finally settles on hallucination, Adela is indifferent. In her inmost heart she knew that hallucination is a cover for her own failure, her self-deception. Tentatively she suggests that Mrs. Moore knew what had happened, and perhaps through 'telepathy'. But telepathy,, she feels, is a slick, meagre term, the last resort of rationalists who have exhausted themselves spiritually. The question, what cured her of 'hallucination' is provided by Fielding with another rational answer. Superintendent McBryde had psychologically 'exorcised' her. Adela had reservation on this score also, as is evident from her reference to Mrs. Moore's belief in ghosts. Perhaps, subconsciously, Adela believed that Mrs. Moore's memory had spiritually 'exorcised' her.

The rational appraisal is self-defeating because it indicates Fielding's and Adela's spiritual limitations, and their ignorance of certain truths :

Perhaps life is a mystery, not a muddle; they could not tell. Perhaps the hundred Indias which fuss and squabble so tiresomely are one, and the universe they mirror is one. They had not the apparatus for judging. (p. 229)

A rather severe censure of intellectuals, underlining mercilessly their limited comprehension. Nor do the conformity of views and the newly forged relationship bring satisfaction :

A friendliness, as of dwarfs shaking hands, was in the air. . . . They spoke the same language, and held the same opinions. Yet they were dissatisfied. When they agreed : 'I want to go on living a bit,' or, 'I don't believe in God,' the words were followed by a curious backwash as though the universe had displaced itself to fill up a tiny void, or as though they had seen their own gestures from an immense height . . . . dwarfs talking, shaking hands, and assuring each other that they stood on the same footing of insight. (pp. 229-230)

The rational exchange instead of bringing a sense of satisfaction makes them feel ineffectual and wistful, making them feel that they had missed out something in life :

But wistfulness descended on them now, as on other occasions ; the shadow of the shadow of a dream fell over their clearcut interests, and objects never seen again seemed messages from another world. (p. 230)

Two rational, materialistic persons seldom complement each other. Ronny and Adela had failed to make it emotionally. About the newly developing relationship between Fielding and Adela, the author's sole comment is, 'So it petered out' (p. 230). A sad reflection on intellectuals.

Adela's rational self-appraisal brings her only misery, for instance, the painful knowledge that she was not cut out for love and marriage. As Fielding says, she gets the worst of both worlds. She is renounced by Ronny and her compatriots where allegiance had come through Ronny. The Indians are chilled by her behaviour, and they know intuitively that :

She had felt, while she recanted, no passion of love for those whom she had wronged. (p. 212)

This is the difference between Adela and Mrs. Moore. Perhaps the rational machinery helps her to retrieve her integrity. Because she no longer has any secrets, her echo disappears after the trial, which implies she is honest again. But honesty does not bring her spiritual succour. As rationalists, she and Fielding have no faith in God, or in spiritual recompense. Perhaps the only spiritual recompense she gets is the friendship and admiration of at least one right-minded individual, that is Fielding. In the end she decides to return to England, where among friends her sort, she would cease to drift as she had done in India. There she would settle down to a career and a lonely bachelor existence, the fate of all the emotionally incapacitated heroes and heroines in Forster.

Rationalism does not turn Adela into a cynic, as it does Fielding, after Aziz's trial. The wistfulness described earlier is more evident in her than in Fielding. Though she cancels out love and marriage for herself, unlike Fielding, who sounds drastically cynical, Adela wants other people to experience these (p. 228).

This is where Mrs. Moore's posthumous influence starts operating. Straying out in an alien soil, the rational apparatus had been immobi-

lised. But the moment one is in the Mediterranean (the human norm as Fielding describes it, and which we should qualify as the norm of the rationally inclined human), rationalism is an operative force again. The Mediterranean clarity helps Adela to see that the person who had freed her from the prison of indecision and hypocrisy was Mrs. Moore. The least she could do to compensate her, who died of the strain of discharging her duties to the younger generation, is to take up her unfinished task, that is her duties to her younger children that had so troubled her when she was in India. With this purpose in mind, when Fielding returns to Grasmere, England, Adela introduces him to Stella, Mrs. Moore's daughter, and precipitates their marriage. She also settles a sum on Ralph which frees him from material obligations. Adela rightly guesses that the concern uppermost in Mrs. Moore's mind had been that people who so wished, should marry happily, and that the race should continue.

Emotionally inadequate intellectuals are thus a hindrance to racial continuance and to a realisation of the idealist vision of world unity as conjured up by Whitman in his poem. Personal relations bridging racial, cultural and social barriers, to forge a world unity has meaning only in terms of humanistic principles such as Mrs. Moore's, Aziz's, and Godbole's. These happen to be religious principles also. For Mrs. Moore, such relations fulfil God's purpose on earth, a view identical with Whitman's:

Lo soul! seest thou not God's purpose from the first?  
 The earth to be spanned, connected by net-work,  
 The people to become brothers and sisters,  
 The oceans to be crossed, the distant brought near,  
 The lands to be wedded together. (*Passage to India*,  
 II. 31-36)

For many visionaries, world unity is epitomised in the Indian peninsula.<sup>10</sup> From time immemorial, invading hordes speaking different languages, professing different religions and culture, have clashed, merged or retreated. Has a synthesis in terms of nationhood as visualised by Aziz and his compatriots at Chandrapore, after their confrontation with the English rulers, been achieved? Will that be a worthwhile and valid synthesis at all?

India a nation! What an apotheosis! Waddling in at this hour of the world to take her seat! She, whose only peer was the Holy Roman Empire, she shall rank with Guatemala and Belgium perhaps. (p. 261)

This is Forster's and Fielding's mocking retort to Aziz who attempts to solve India's problem politically. Forster ridicules the idea of synthesis in terms of narrow nationalism, as alien to the spirit of liberalism that is inherent in India. In the light of later political developments in the country, such as the dismemberment of the country into Pakistan and India, and later into yet another independent unit, Bangladesh, Forster's exploratory comment is searching and prophetic.

Forster's remarks are not so much in the nature of a final comment as an attempt to answer tentatively several questions that are part of the same problem. If racial barriers persist, who or what is to blame? The incompleteness of personalities like Adela's and Fielding's? Or, the sectarianism that is inherent in certain cultures, and that thwart assimilation? Again, what is conducive to racial continuance? Exclusiveness and sectarianism? Or, inclusiveness and assimilation? Forster has attempted to study these problems in his last novel. The problem had also been touched upon in the earlier novels. *Where Angels Fear to Tread* had experimented with inter-racial marriage alliances and friendship. The Schlegel's part-German extraction had allowed Forster to repeat the experiment in *Howards End*. Class differences and integration feature in almost all the novels. *A Passage to India* allows the novelist to study the question in a wider historical perspective. Asian and European races are brought together for the purpose of a closer scrutiny.

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#### ABBREVIATIONS

WA	Where Angels Fear to Tread
LJ	The Longest Journey
RV	A Room with a View
HE	Howards End

# THE NOVEL AND *THE CASTLE* : THE METHOD OF FRANZ KAFKA

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## I

IT is intriguing to try to straighten Kafka out : this is something, one feels, that Kafka himself perpetually invites and tempts us to do. Yet, to go on making this attempt seems so often to result in straying further and further away from the end and getting increasingly baffled in the manner of so many Kafka-heroes. The way to solve the Kafka-problem is perhaps not to try at all and to wait for the moment of illumination (as Burgel counselled K. to do in chapter XVIII of *The Castle*). Another possible way could be to make a lynx-eyed analysis of the verbal texture of the German text—although the excellent Muir (and Wilkins and Kaiser) translation, with its faithful rendering even of the punctuation points, might serve the purpose as well as the original. I have, however, the humbler aim of seeking to understand his artistic intentions by locating him in the tradition of fiction and thereby exploring his method in *The Castle*.

Since, axiomatically, the artistic shape of a work of fiction is generally determined by the texture of life represented in it, the first remarkable thing one sees in Kafka's works is that they are so devoid of the sense of the throb of life, of God's plenty, of what Henry James called "the human scene at large".<sup>1</sup> By this I do not imply only the huge, organic sense which the grand old leviathans of the nineteenth century give us—Thackeray, Dickens, Tolstoy, Balzac, and so forth : obese, maybe often uncouth but grand artefacts, all the same. What I mean is that even the overwhelmingly acute sense of life which modern, introspective art-novels throw up (for example, those of Joyce, Virginia Woolf, and Faulkner) is not accessible in Kafka. The texture of Kafka's works is weird indeed : the maddening blending of the fantastic and the real, so that one does not know at first which end to look at them from. Instead of beginning to



consider his novels and stories as "realistic"—this is one of the reasons that make them look so puzzling—one had perhaps better grant it from the outset that they *are* fantasies, for they do represent existence in another dimension which defies the air of probability. Even the earliest novel-fragment, *Wedding Preparations in the Country*,<sup>2</sup> which has a "naturalistic" surface, suggests the bizarre in the experiences of its protagonist. Otherwise, to take some random instances, the bulk of his fiction offers such illustrations as the bridge that tells the story of its life in "The Bridge"; the narrator who flew on a bucket in "The Bucket-Rider"; the hunter who died yet got stuck midway between life and death and travels in a coffin in the death-ship in "The Hunter Gracchus"; and so forth. Then, there is *The Castle* itself, with its unavailable, Big Brother forces spreading an inexplicable pattern of existence. Some incidents in the novel are unobtrusively yet very surely queer. Thus K., out in the village and in Lasemann's Cottage, experiences the passage of time from morning till evening as one or two hours (p. 30), which looks rather like Einsteinian relativity; Barnabas glides incredibly swiftly along the snow (pp. 42); K's waiting in and then going away from the Herrenhof yard is as if telepathically understood by Klammm (p. 139); Jeremiah, one of the two assistants of K., seems suddenly to have grown into a tired, old person from a sprightly youth (pp. 283-84); and so forth. Indeed, one seems to have the impression of some persons exercising remote control over the very process of life. *The Castle* indeed could possibly be taken as splendid science-fiction, if only modern electronics had existed in Kafka's time.

Yet, these works of Kafka do not have the inner pattern of fantasies and share the features of "real" existence. The inhabitants of these worlds are not as *simply* fantastic as, say, the Gryphon in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, or Swift's talking horses, or even Melville's elusive white whale. While fantastic, they wear at the same time the lineaments of reality; the bridge, which wears a tailcoat and moves its head, has "railless beams" ("The Bridge", pp. 116-17); the flying bucket is the repository of coal while it has "the virtues of a good steed" ("The Bucket Rider", p. 127); the castle people are, after all, real men. Further, the Kafka-hero's excursion into the other world is not a simple confrontation with the supernatural, as is the case, for example, with Goodman Brown going and meeting the devil in Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown", or with the Salvation Army founder "General" Booth's resonant visit to Jesus Christ in Vachael Lindsay's poem, "General Booth Enters into Heaven". The Kafka-character, on the other hand, establishes a human *rapproch* with the other world: the

dead-alive hunter Gracchus takes drink given him by the wife of the pilot of the deathship ("The Hunter Gracchus", p. 108), the weird ping-pong balls dancing perpetually behind Blumfeld are touched by him and are as much a part of his sober experience as his two assistants ("Blumfeld an Elderly Bachelor", e.g. pp. 158, 165); K., after all, is able to make love to Klamm's mistress, Frieda (*The Castle*, ch. III). Thus, Kafka's is a peculiarly mimetic art—it is in neither the higher nor the lower mimetic mode of fiction described by Northrop Frye;<sup>3</sup> one would say that this is the art of supra-mimesis or para-mimesis, and its nature is perhaps best indicated in the late W.J. Harvey's suggestive phrase on Kafka, "the naturalism of the fantastic".<sup>4</sup> This method of double fantasy—the fantasy fantasized into the shape of reality, as it were—at any rate transmutes the method of surrealism into that of prose fiction (the bucket and the bridge are very directly surrealist pictures).

## II

The point, however, is why Kafka so fused the fantastic and the real: it might be a kind of guessing-game (Kafka, so to say, seeking to behave like the castle people), or the expression of the bewilderment of Kafka himself. Whatever it may be, the staggering effect of this deliberate fusion surely functions as Kafka's strategy to externalize the bewilderment of existence, and what is more important, to suggest that the real world is replete at every point with the sense of some other, inexplicable existence.

The theme that sustains this vision of life is, to use a term familiar in Kafka-criticism, that of quest. The identity of the quest, however, does not hugely matter—it may be, as the clichés go, the quest for one's place in the community, for one's vocation, for the grace of God and so forth. What matters is the essence of the quest: it is, as the dream-fantasy of the protagonist of *Description of a Struggle* puts it, the effort to make the lungs "search for their own rhythm" (p. 64)—in short, to discover the subtlest core of one's own identity. The object of the quest may likewise be grand or trivial—often trivial: a wedding preparation (*Wedding Preparations in the Country*); to take a stroll up a hill (*Description of a Struggle*); to go to a castle; whatever the term of the quest, it is, however, a representation of the Kafka-hero's perpetual striving to cope with the rhythm of life.

In this concern of his, Kafka seeks to represent the very quest-impulse inherent in the universal human psyche; in doing so, he

expresses his concern with that area of darkness, the borderland of groping and getting bewildered, which precedes the quest's end—even when it succeeds, and surely when it does not.

### III

In order to express this subtle and complex thematic pattern, the essential technique chosen by Kafka was to crystallize the general human response to life—as he found this response to be—into the intensity of subjective experience. The obvious need for oblique ways of expression led inevitably to his use of imagistic and symbolistic methods. These methods take on a great deal of their effect from the shuffling of the two planes of reality on the one hand and the use of the point of view on the other.

Usually, Kafka uses the subjective point of view to give shape to his strange worlds—the one notable exception is “The Hunter Gracchus”, done in omniscient narration which frames the hunter’s dramatic monologue. Two types of the subjective point of view operate in his works: the majority of his stories are in first-person narration, and the novels—with the exception of the first-person *Description of a Struggle*—and some stories (like “Blumfeld an Elderly Bachelor”) follow the Jamesian “centre-of-consciousness” technique. In both instances, however, the effect is that of the representation of the texture of the individual’s responses to an enigmatic other world in which he is involved: thus, the fantasies of the protagonist in *Description of a Struggle* give the sense of a mazy futility; the bridge’s sensibility in “The Bridge” expresses helpless stasis in a world of endless waiting; the point of view of K. in *The Castle*, likewise, gives shape to the muddledom of existence in the castle-village continuum. The Kafkan point of view, however, is seldom a wholly flesh-and-blood one, its very thinness having some symbolical importance. In *The Castle*, for instance, K’s point of view is not merely that of a geographical outsider, but of one from a normal order into some other different dimension of existence. The effect, therefore, is that of a horizontal vision colliding with a vertical reality, as it were, and the inevitable chaos that results from it—as the story illustrates—suggests the inherent absurdity of K.’s search. What is also important, the reader’s puzzled response to the novel’s texture itself—supported by his involvement in K.’s point of view—is analogous to K.’s bafflement about the castle, so that the responses of K. generate themselves into a three-dimensional echo outside of the novel.

The relationship between the quester's point of view and the fantastic world to which it thus gives shape is in itself symbolic. The Kafka-hero's journey from the normal world to this other track of existence suggests maybe the individual soul's journey from the nineteenth century to the twentieth, from the rut of a disorganized existence into artistic self-expression, from birth to life, from life to death, and so forth. The passage between the two worlds is invariably symbolized by a link existing between the two : the train followed by the horse-driven coach, which take Raban from the city to the village in *Wedding Preparations*; the river which the narrator sees in his fantasy in *Description of a Struggle*; the death-ship in "The Hunter Gracchus"; the wooden bridge along which K. comes to the village in *The Castle* (ch. I). However, greater significance is seen in the symbols for the object of quest, which operate within the general symbolic framework and in the terms of which *The Castle* is best understood. Since to look at them calls up a spatial discussion, I would take it for granted that they diffuse themselves in the novel's temporal structure of the series of K.'s efforts to achieve a fruitful contact with the castle.

#### IV

Several overarching key-symbols help us to the core of the theme of *The Castle*. I would place them in the context of the first and the second novels of Kafka, *Wedding Preparations in the Country* and *Description of a Struggle*,<sup>5</sup> respectively, which very definitely foreshadow the theme and method of *The Castle*. Through these key-symbols Kafka makes us aware of the significance of things of which K. is ignorant, and therefore help us "look over" the novel. There are three such symbols functioning almost mythically in the novel, which denote the ideal that is quested for but is controverted : "garden", "height" as "hill", and "light".

First, the "garden". Kafka's archetypal quest-theme is complicated by its being the expression of an urban romanticism as well as that of his vast, Judeo-Christian, cultural heritage. In the novels, the Kafka-hero is thus often seen to be a city man or a city-oriented man involved in an attempt at self-expression in the world of nature which takes the shape of the open space, or the garden. The village in *Wedding Preparations*—which surely anticipates the one in *The Castle*—is one such open space in nature to which the protagonist Raban goes from his city-dwelling to make wedding preparations. The mud and the rains in the village—these dogging him from the city but

tolerable there—insufferably heighten the sense of futility, in accompaniment with the darkness of the village and the queer habits of the villagers (e.g. pp. 29-30). This uncongeniality makes him long for the city (p. 30) so that the world of nature inverts the image of the idyllic garden where he had sought to fulfil his expectations. In *Description of a Struggle*, again, the narrator's fantasy represents an actual garden with its idyllic equipments : "... meadows which farther on merged into bushes behind which ... one could see bright avenues of fruit trees leading to green hills ... I thought : Here I could be content. For here it is secluded and beautiful. It won't take much courage to live here" (p. 37). Yet, this garden is distanced from him by a river which even as a part of this world of nature makes it unapproachable—which he cannot cross nor can the fat man from the other side, who gets drowned in it (p. 64). Thus the garden itself carries the seeds of the destruction of hopes, and this is paralleled in the trees of the Laurenziberg which become the scene of the desperate attempt at suicide by the narrator's friend (p. 70). Kafka's open space in nature is therefore at once a Biblical and a romantic symbol, standing for Edenic innocence and beauty away from the trivialities and muddle of city life, but in actuality is the controversion of the ideal it is expected to be.

The village in *The Castle* finds its significance in this context. Its importance, incidentally, is seen in the fact that K.'s existence is throughout conditioned by his stay there ; further, it is worth noting that, in the first draft of *The Castle*, called *Temptation in the Village* in *The Diaries*,<sup>6</sup> there is no castle and the narrator's experiences are all contained in the village with its garden-lineaments of open paths and tall trees (p. 280). The village in *The Castle*, too, like the two other open spaces, defeats Edenic expectations. It looks like a greasy, squalid, eternally snow-bound place without any foliage, without any bird—except the crows that are once seen to be hovering above the castle (p. 29)—, without any spot of colour. The only "natural" feature of the village is the wild weather which stands to K. himself for his bewilderment (e.g. pp. 149). Since one of his expectations was to strike roots in the village—marrying Frieda and so forth—this aspect of the village is obviously a metaphor of his frustration. The village thus becomes the anti-typal image of the garden, the symbol of Kafka's—maybe the twentieth century's as well—defeated religiosity and romanticism.

## V

However, K.'s aspirations in *The Castle* reach beyond the village and the novel's total significance is therefore fully rendered by the two other symbols. It is through "height" as "hill" that "right" is perhaps best approached. In a general sense, "hill" is always a potential metaphor for the distant ideal sought to be attained, and this, along with several other significances accumulating to it, very well explains the efforts of K.

One had best place this in the context of the symbol's appearance elsewhere in Kafka. Thus, for instance, while the first-person narrator takes a stroll up the Laurenziberg with his friend in *Description of a Struggle*, the entire chinese-box-like narrative structure unfolds itself in keeping with their climbing up the hill. While each fantasy-tale in it denotes a quest (e.g., of the narrator, pp. 34-8; of the fat man in the narrator's fantasy, pp. 38-42; of the man in the church in the fatman's narrative, pp. 44-52; and so forth), the groundstory ends on a note of puzzled agony for the friend as well as the narrator at the point of their having climbed up to the top of the hill (pp. 70-1); thus the hill-climbing becomes the symbol of the struggle to cope with life. Then, too, in one of the fragments with their K-figures without any Christian name, which foreshadow *The Castle*, we see one such K., after a long journey, coming to his destination— a house on a hill that had stood faraway in the day; this is in *Fragments from Notebooks and Loose Pages* :

...he suddenly found himself standing at the foot of the hill ... And he climbed up the hill ... Two rooms to right and left of the stairs, with their doors open ... they were otherwise empty. But from above from the top of the staircase, which vanished into darkness, a tremulous, almost rattling voice asked who had come. K. took a great stride over the first three stairs, which were broken in the middle... Upstairs, too, the door of the room was open. (pp. 381-82)<sup>7</sup>

The journey up the hill which tapers into the staircase and then into the top of the house here symbolizes the last point of an effort; yet, at the end of the "climbing" there are only "broken" objects, the "rattling" voice, and emptiness, which reflect K.'s fumbling expectations. This indeed looks like the end of *The Castle* only if K. there were able to succeed in his mission.

The castle in the novel—a magnification of the house in the fragment—gives its impression very largely in terms of height focussed into hill. It is situated on a hill, and the first phrase which introduces it, as K.'s point of view images it, swathes it in its hilly aspect: the "castle hill" (ch. I, p. 11); as K. seeks to see it, he sees the "illusory emptiness above him" (*ibid.*). This is the key-image of the controverted ideal; and this sense is heightened afterwards by the high but flaked-off, crumbling aspect of the castle on its hill (pp. 19-20).

Further "height"-images intensify this significance of the hill. The castle's feature, for example, is crystallized into a tower-metaphor. As K. looks at the castle, he contrasts the castle-tower with the church-tower in his home town, with the "loftier and the clearer meaning than the muddle of everyday life", while the attic of the castle-tower looks "fumbling", like "a melancholy-mad tenant" (*ibid.*). The hill as the embodiment of height thus symbolizes the ideal, the distant object which invites the effort to reach it with all the solemnity of religious worship.

Other interesting significances, too, gather to the hill. The castle-hill, for instance, is not without a suggestion of Mount Olympus; the castle-officials, as they issue forth from time to time from their hilly abode, do suggest the identity of pagan gods, in their high-handed dealings and also in their wanton relationships with village women. It is just possible that Kafka read a pagan organization in life, against which the simplistic, Judeo-Christian idealism of K. stumbles in a futile manner. The castle-hill, however, has a likelier symbolical equation with Mount Sinai, from where Moses got God's word (*Exodus*, 19-23). This is supported by the significance with which Kafka invests Mount Sinai in some fragmentary writings, as, for example, in the one in *Paralipomena* :

Any one who has once been in a state of suspended animation will tell terrible stories about it but he cannot say what it is like after death . . . fundamentally he has only lived through an extraordinary experience and not extraordinary life has become more valuable to him as a result. It is similar with every one who has experienced something extraordinary. For instance, Moses certainly experienced something "extraordinary" on Mount Sinai . . . . we may occasionally, for instance, have the wish to experience the experience of the man in a state of suspended animation, or Moses' experience . . . (pp. 429-30).

Thus Kafka links Mount Sinai with transcendental life-in-death, "suspended animation", or any "extraordinary experience" that sublimates everyday life into an intensity. However, another fragment, in *Fragments from Notebooks and Loose Pages*, indicates the nature of the effort itself to go to Mount Sinai :

Many people prowl round Mount Sinai . . . But none of them comes straight down a broad, newly made, and smooth road that does its own part in making one's strides longer and swifter. (p. 343)

The road to and from the mountain, the symbol of the effort to attain the ideal, thus indicates the difficulty and obstruction inherent in it. Speaking of K., as he thinks of the castle, up there he wishes to go to receive, as it were, the word from Count West-West or his surrogate Klammm. Therefore, his is the desire to gain transcendental, extraordinary experience, analogous to Moses's on Mount Sinai from everyday life. However, as we see in the novel, his "strides" throughout the story are slowed down and shortened by the very nature of the effort itself. Further, the castle-hill as the thing-in-itself does not tally with the idealistic expectation with which K.'s imagination endows it (e.g., in his response to the castle-tower). While looking like Mount Sinai, it is, therefore also potentially its inverted image, the zenith-image of the nadir, so that K.'s frustrations seem to derive from an inverted search.

## VI

The most important symbol in *The Castle* is "light" along with the contrasted "darkness", in terms of which the entire world of the novel exists. It depends for its effect on the impression of this world in K.'s point of view which throws up a texture of poor visibility throughout the narrative. It is a world of darkness—the impression of daylight is seldom present—in which K. moves about. The greater part of the story is enacted in dark interiors: thus, for example, K.'s first night in the Bridge Inn (ch. I); the scene in Lasemann's cottage (*ibid.*); the scene with the two assistants and Barnabas in the Bridge Inn (ch. II); the Frieda-and-K. episode in the Herrenhof (ch. III); the long wait for Klammm in the Herrenhof (ch. VIII); the comic episode at the school (ch. XI); Olga's and K.'s long conversation (ch. XV); the encounter with Burgel (ch. XX); and so forth. When it is not dark, the action takes place at least in twilight or dusk. It is significant, too, in this context that of the three occasions when K. seeks



to see the castle, two are in dusk (the third, in sunlight, has an obverse meaning, discussed later). The first is when he has come to the village in the evening (ch. I, opening paragraph) and the second when the castle looks like a silent observer in the dusky distance (ch. VIII)—in the German original, different words suggestive of this poor visibility like *finster*, *finisternis*, *dunkel*, *dämmerlicht*, *dämmerung*, *abends*, and so forth are interestingly scattered on such narrative occasions.<sup>8</sup> The fantasy-impression of this poor visibility has an important aesthetic function. The visual frustration indicated by it exists as an externalized metaphor for the half-light of understanding, the dubious success of K. in his search for the ideal to establish himself in the eyes of the castle—as the landsurveyor or as Frieda's lover—and therefore to go there, or to see Klammer or Erlanger.

The significance of light is manifold. It stands for the object of quest, for understanding, so that to *see* stands for "to strive"; there are religious overtones, too: that of the Biblical significance of life—it is interesting to see that the firmament created by God in *Genesis* (1:vi) next to light is singularly absent from the story (save for one fleeting vision, p. 20); also that of the Manichean significance (evil or darkness engulfing divinity or light), although it would be an oversimplification to say only that. At any rate "light" heightens the story's theme by figuratively making out K's efforts as the quest for light from the sphere of darkness in the firmamentless, sunless, snow-bound village which symbolizes a world of spiritual floundering. In this context, the first paragraph of the novel is seen to throw the key-perspective to the theme, in which the symbols interweave with one another:

It was late in the *evening* when K. arrived. The village was deep in *snow*. The castle hill was hidden in *mist* and *darkness*, nor was there even a *glimmer of light*. K. stood for a long time gazing into the illusory *emptiness above* him.

(p. 11, my italics)

The village-landscape—the "garden"—is characterized by snow and mist—the word for "mist" in the German original, *Nebel* (*Das Schloss*, p. 7) which also means "haze" or "smoke" very well suggests K's situation in respect of the castle throughout the novel. The distant castle hill—the German text has *one* word for it, *Schloßberg* (*ibid.*)—, the ideal, is hidden in "darkness", that is, the absence of understanding. The upshot of it all is "emptiness" which so well sums up the story of K.

Of the three types of light in the novel, two are artificial: lanterns and candles, and electric light. Their significance is, again, well understood in the context of the earliest *Wedding Preparations*. Electric lights in that novel are connected to the urban culture (e.g., p. 20) to which Raban belongs. On the other hand, lamps and candles, very faintly illuminating an otherwise engulfing darkness, are linked with the muddle and senselessness of existence typified by the village where he goes (e.g. pp. 25, 26, 28, 29, 30). The symbolism obviously indicates Kafka's urban, inverted romanticism: the quest for light in the garden is unachieved even before it has started. In *The Castle*, likewise, it is only the faint glimmer of lanterns and candles which seek to dispel the darkness down in the village (e.g. pp. 23, 30, 37, 149, 156, 281, 291, 294). This metaphorically explains the absence of the understanding of life—while the castle is fully endowed with it—, which characterizes the village. K., staying in the village, has to use such light, thereby straining his eyesight; his act of reading Klammm's letter in dim lantern light (p. 150), for example, symbolizes his attempt to understand the volume of life. Existence in the village, therefore, indicates the bottling up of the efforts to understand life in the midst of lanterns and candles. On the other hand, the superior overlords of the castle, with their total control over life, move about in strong electric light to see their way through the darkness of the village. Significantly, Klammm's first appearance is in "strong incandescent light" (p. 53); electric light suddenly blazes when Momus is about to come to the dark Herrenhof yard (p. 133); and so forth (see also pp. 127, 129, 136, 295, 312, 347). This difference between the two types of artificial light is the same as between the two juxtaposed inns—the Bridge Inn where the villagers crowd and the Herrenhof which is meant for the Herts from the castle.

The sun, or sunlight, upon which a number of meanings converge, is at the centre of this light-symbolism. It is the focal point of the Biblical significance of life: what is also important, from the way K. looks forward to it, it suggests Mithras, the sun-god of the ancient mystery religion, too; then, generally, as the distant orb it signifies the ideal; it also suggests power, glory, and understanding. The sun, however, appears only twice in the novel and is once suggested, but each time so intensely and emphatically that it goes straight into the heart of the novel.

The key to the theme of *The Castle* is thus brought forth in K's memory of his childhood experience of having been able to climb the high grave-yard wall on a sunlit morning:

. . . it was only the smooth *high* wall that they had wanted to *conquer*. But one morning—the empty, quiet market place had been *flooded with sunshine*, when had K. ever seen it like that either before or since?—he had succeeded in climbing it with astonishing ease . . . *to the top at the first attempt* . . . he looked down and round about him, over his shoulders, too, at the crosses mouldering in the ground, nobody was greater than he at that place and that moment.

(p. 44, my italics)

This beautiful sudden moment is of course epiphany and the flooding sunshine is associated with quest as well as conquest; the climbing to the top is the symbol of the total achievement of *life*, with which are contrasted the mouldering crosses below. Interestingly, this is juxtaposed with the journey of K. with Barnabas along the snowy, dark village on the level of narration, where he is frustrated in his effort to go to the castle. The sunlight, into which the height-image is fused, is thus the symbol of the ultimate moment of attaining the ideal of living life in its purest sense: this explains K.'s impulse behind all his exploits, the impulse to feel the epiphanic moment of transcendental existence.

Yet, K. carries this impulse from his earlier existence of normality, the world of the soaring church tower. The sphere of the castle is totally uncongenial to this impulse, and the nature of K.'s obvious frustration—illustrated throughout the story—, thereby of the significance of the castle itself, is very well understood in terms of the "sun"-symbolism. We find this on the only occasion when sunlight is seen in the village, as K. looks at the castle tower:

. . . the *tower* of a house . . . pierced by small windows that *glittered in the sun*, a somewhat maniacal *glitter* and topped by what looked like an attic, with battlements that were irregular, broken, fumbling . . . It was as if a melancholy-mad tenant . . . had burst through the roof and lifted himself up to the gaze of the world. (p. 20, my italics)

In this alloy of *height* and *light*, the sunlight with its "maniacal glitter" sums up the very image of absurdity thrown up by the "fumbling"

tower in its aspect of "a melancholy-mad tenant" Thus it is seen that the ideal, symbolized by the free and generous sunlight, is totally controverted in its relation with the castle. The castle is seen not to be what K. thinks it to be; the sun, in its reflection on it, looks like belonging to a mirror-world of values, or like the sun of another planet, or like the simple, familiar sun overwhelmed in a Gnostic world, or, what is most important, like anti-Mithras. However much, therefore, K. might try to achieve an epiphany, to do so in this place in his own way is symbolically impossible.

The point for us to understand is K.'s inability to understand the meaning of the worth of darkness in the castle-village existence. He does not understand, for example, that his ideal, the epiphany, is to be achieved here—if at all—only in terms of darkness. Twice K. comes as near as possible to achieving an epiphany in the village and both times it is in darkness: the first time when he is making love to Frieda in the Herrenhof (ch. III, pp. 57-9) and the second time in the act of sipping brandy in the Herrenhof yard (ch. VIII, pp. 132-33). What is most important, it is at midnight, as Burgel tells K. near the end of the novel, that it might be possible for someone to get the object of desire fulfilled by the castle (ch. XVIII, p. 322). This does not of course mean that the castle is in the right but that K. is in the wrong only in the sense that he does not have the technique to grapple with this obverse type of reality; he does not imagine that the journey through darkness in this place is the way to light, if light is to be attained at all; the castle, one imagines, would not grant him anything else.

It is for this reason that the series of K's exploits takes place through dark interiors punctuated by dimly lit scenes. The sun with all its connotations therefore obviously stays in memory, as for example, it did in K's nostalgia (p. 44), and not in the present. The episode just before the end of the story shows Pepi the chambermaid making K. the offer to hibernate with her and two other maids in the dark underground chamber of the Herrenhof till spring and summer come, but telling him at the same time that "in memory ... spring and summer seem as short as though they didn't last longer than two days" (p. 381). K. of course characteristically refuses this last offer made to him in the story; meanwhile, the short-lived spring and summer, suggestive of sunlight, therefore of the epiphanic ideal, thus exists only as something to be remembered and cherished, not to be fully achieved, because "even on those days, even during the most beautiful day, even then sometimes snow falls" (*ibid.*). Thus,

along with his inability to climb up the castle hill, K's excursions in darkness indicate the paradoxical uselessness of his quest : for he is a sun-treader (to adapt Browning's famous image of Shelley), as it were, for which reason life and light are not available to him.

## VII

The method in *The Castle*, thus determined by its symbolical apparatus of the exhausting, battering quest-theme, makes it out as a myth of existence—in Kafka's terms, of course. The method has interesting upshots. For one thing, it indicates Kafka's attempt to involve his readers in the very experiences of his hero : there is the echoed point of view; there is the "visibility"-metaphor, so that the readers find it difficult to "see light"—to understand the work—the same as K. does; there is the absence of a conclusion to the novel (typical of Kafka), which dramatizes the inconclusiveness of life as K. found it to be. In this externalization of the theme into the novel's artefact, Kafka obviously makes it approach the condition of the meta-novel. Further, the film-negative-wise, ceiling-under-the-feet sort of supra-mimesis, too, functions as an extended metaphor of the intricacy of life as viewed by Kafka; this, while it shapes the novel to some extent as an Auden poem in prose, indeed takes Ortega y Gasset's view of the dehumanization of modern art, for example, "the intrusion of the human in art is taboo" to modernists,<sup>9</sup> to a logical extreme (Ortega's essay of 1925 was more or less coeval with *The Castle*).

Yet, Kafka's novel—as indeed all his works—is not so purged of the human context as Ortega supposes and would have modern art to be; on the contrary, it indicates Kafka's desperate attempt to suggest the very electronics of human life, as it were. In a sense it is like Greek tragedy, but the heroic conflict is undermined by the theme of groping in a spiritual no-man's land; in another, a comic sense, it enacts the Don Quixote archetype, with this difference that even the windmill does not exist where it is expected to do. Incidentally, one feels that Kafka might have been immensely helped by an Indian sensibility—the teleological voyage of Nachiketa in the *Kathoponishad* (1, i), for example, ended in success because he knew how to do it (as K. does not). However, Kafka himself was able to reach a synthesized view of life in the last, "Oklahoma Nature Theatre" section—something quite unlike anything else written by him—in *America*, in which the very absurdity of the "garden" becomes the image of merciful fruition of the effort to locate one's self.

The exhausting, teleological search of K. in *The Castle* was no doubt to some extent Kafka's, too; the one's desire for epiphany perhaps reflects the other's for theophany. One recollects in this context a one-phrase, fragmentary aphorism by Kafka : "Writing as a form of prayer" (*Fragments from Note-books and Loose Pages*, p. 343); what is important is that he sought to make his writing one deliberate act of prayer as, say, did Hopkins. However, since prayer is ultimately individual in nature, yet since his novel was published by Max Brod (in spite of Kafka's will that it should not be)—the same as Hopkins's poetry was by Robert Bridges—and therefore ceased to be merely individual, one has to have a mixed response to it. One can neither totally share in the prayer, nor can stand totally aloof from it. One can, however, aesthetically empathize to some extent. Life was a catch for Kafka—maybe he conquered it, maybe not, we do not know; the castle was definitely a catch for K.—he could not conquer it; *The Castle* is—but here one refuses to get entangled in any catch—a literary work that one unfastens. One does it by getting out of the inviting immersion in its mire of existence and by understanding it as the fictional image of the eddies of transitional experience of the human spirit, with the help of literary clues which Kafka the cabalist has willy-nilly left behind.

#### NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. I have followed these volumes of Kafka, to which subsequent page-references are made for the works mentioned :  
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3. See, e.g., Northrop Frye. *Anatomy of Criticism*, Princeton, 1957, first paperback printing, 1971, pp. 50-1, 58-9.
4. W. J. Harvey, *Character and the Novel*, London, 1965, p. 203.

5. In his notes to *Wedding Preparations in the Country and Other Posthumous Writings* (p. 431). Max Brod dates *Wedding Preparations in the Country* as one of the earliest works of Kafka (circa 1907), written before *Description of a Struggle* (circa 1907-08), and thereby corrects his dating of the latter as Kafka's earliest work in the post-script to *Description of a Struggle and The Great Wall of China*.

Incidentally, I have deliberately kept out of the discussion the two other famous novels of Kafka since, to my mind, their subject-matter is more or less repeated in that of *The Castle*—as indeed Charles Osborne says, "it could almost be said that Kafka did not write three novels, but wrote or attempted to write one novel three times" (*Kafka*, London, 1962, p. 92).

6. *The Diaries of Franz Kafka*, 1910-23, ed. Max Brod, Penguin Modern Classics reprint, 1957 (1910-13, trans. Joseph Kresh; 1914-23, trans. Martin Greenberg with the cooperation of Hannah Arendt), p. 280.
7. Of the three other significant K.-fragments one is in *The Eight Octavo Note-books* and two are in *Fragments from Note-books and Loose Pages* (see *Wedding Preparations in the Country and Other Posthumous Writings*, pp. 127, 272-73, and 293).
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## THE CONFESSIONAL STRAIN IN SAUL BELLOW'S FICTION

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LAKSHMI KANNAN

THE triumph of Saul Bellow may also, obliquely be the triumph of the one individual who can be heard in his own voice in each of his eight major works of fiction. This individual may not be held in great esteem by his society, but he has tremendous structural importance in the world of Bellow's fiction. The urgency of the private voice of the individual is sustained, as it were, on its own strength. As each of Bellow's protagonists creates his own premises, speaks his own idiom, satisfying, as it were, some inner rhetorical need, we find his novels infused with a deep, confessional strain. Bellow notes that mass society has only the Church offer a place for human values. But even here, it is made more or less public by the Church. Therefore, says Bellow in "The Sealed Treasure"<sup>1</sup>, "It forces certain elements of the genius of our species to go into hiding. In America they take curiously personal, secret forms." It also, in the process, introverts the form Ihab Hassan<sup>2</sup> speaks of "the fictional correlative of the self in recoil"; he explains that "our life can take shape only in sudden epiphanies or isolated moments of crisis". In Bellow's fiction, following this individual's consciousness is an experience for the reader as narrow as it is deep. Here the single point of view, and the relation in which it stands to the narrative, is in a constant state of flux, and is preserved in its presentational immediacy by the essentially subjective nature of Bellow's art. It is this subjective area that offers a meaningful contact with outside reality and proves fruitful for critical investigations. As James Gordin<sup>3</sup> observes: "Problems of subjectivity need not demand that all such infected areas of fiction be surrounded by a quarantine of silence. Rather, it is just these areas of fiction most vulnerable to subjective response that has been most neglected by formalist criticism."

It is of interest here to note that even by the standards of literary criticism, the 'Confessional' as a form has been traced to its origin in



St. Augustine's *Confessions* by Peter M. Axthelm in *The Modern Confessional Novel*. Of St. Augustine he writes: "His *Confessions* show an acute sensitivity to the problems and conflicts of man's inner life as well as a broad consciousness of evil." This vital connection between one's own inner life and the evil in the objective life is revived again in the post-war literary scenario. Thus introverted, the novel now loses its massive literary ambition in one of its most significant phases in the post-Joyce, Kafka, Camus phase.

This explains much of the undramatic nature of Bellow's first novel, *Dangling Man*. As a classic mode of the confessional strain, it takes a diary form as the only genre in which Joseph can find a context for himself. Without this context of his own making, Joseph cannot speak his thoughts aloud in this "era of hard boileddom"; he later explains that today it is "the code of the athlete, of the tough boy". Writing has always clarified thinking, and Joseph puts it all down in diary, just as Sartre's hero did in *Nausea*, Dostoevsky's in *Notes From the Underground*, Camus in *The Fall* and *The Outsider*. Joseph in *Dangling Man* tries to communicate on two levels—one with himself, which is often done as if he was talking to a tape and then listening to his own taped voice; and the other, with the readers who make good 'listeners'. The diary comes as a long monologue, which breaks into a dialogue only when the Spirit of Alternatives (which is Joseph's alter-ego) comes on to the page on invitation, and as a pure figment of Joseph's imagination. It stimulates the confessional element and teases him to express himself better. We have a sample here :

Spirit : "You're forgetting to be reasonable."

Joseph : "Reasonable! Go on, you make me sick. The sight of you makes me sick. You make me queasy at the stomach with your suave little, false little looks."

If we look at some modern theories of knowledge, particularly those of F. H. Bradley and William James, we find an increasing preoccupation with problems of perception and a distinct development of the Self as a possibly reliable agent of reality. The danger of solipsism is averted by the technique of confessional writing in which drama is born and objectified by the very art of an individual articulating his contact with outer reality, where elements coalesce in his consciousness. Joseph's initial motive is to understand himself and not, as Holden Caulfield does in *The Catcher in the Rye*, to establish

himself in the outside world. It has to be done within the privacy of a diary, for his language is often stark, and barely covers the nakedness of some of his thoughts.

From the angle of technique, the confessional strain is effective for wielding irony. Bellow's second novel, *The Victim*, uses a fairly standard technique of the double for irony, but it works in a reverse way. Irony is achieved, as in *Dangling Man*, through the subjective technique of the confessional strain, the only difference being that both the protagonists, Asa and Albee, are seen and heard by us on their own terms, with a slight bias perhaps towards Asa. It is again confessional literature, in spite of the third person narrative, Peter Axthelm<sup>4</sup> observes: "Perhaps the two most important techniques in the confessional novel is the use of double and the use of irony by both the

author and the hero." The double, he insists, is used by the confessional hero to "express his relations with others in terms of discovery." The double is here used as a felt attribute of an existential likeliness, as a Self, originally seeking a subjective truth, but which breaks itself against an intellectual, objective truth. Using a common Jewish figure in Albee, that of a *schnorrer* ("a ghetto import" according to Sarah Blacher Cohen<sup>5</sup>), Bellow shows as if his role were reversed, that is, as if he was doing his benefactor a favour by accepting money. Because of the confessional strain that runs through the novel, Albee emerges as more human than a mere *schnorrer*, as someone capable of expressing himself in a language of passion. After an unsuccessful suicide attempt, Albee explains to Asa with simplicity—"When you turn against yourself, nobody else means anything to you either". Thus Bellow shows a 'fairness' of treatment, achieving thereby some of his paraliterary motives of opposites ranging freely and "passionately expressed on both sides".<sup>6</sup> Each Self is essentially seen not a fixed concept, but as a flowing process nourishing certain fixities every now and then. We see this clearly, whether it is in Albee's belief that there is a conspiracy of Jews which runs things, which in his description is "Hot stars and cold hearts that's your universe" or whether it is Asa suffering apprehensions about Albee being "predatory" (as Velchaninov likes to think of Trusotsky in Dostoevsky's *The Eternal Husband*). If it is Asa's enormous fear of his own telephone which rings as an ally to his fear, we see it on his own terms. We thus find Bellow opening areas of insecurity for both of them. This brings us to a curious fact in the narrative. Where the journal form of *Dangling Man* at once disciplined Joseph, infusing his writing with a degree of caution, the assumed third-person narra-

tive in *The Victim*, even when it does not shift treacherously between 'I', 'You' and 'He', catches Asa and Albee in unguarded moments, making the novel truly confessional, by making the catalytic and cardinal functions of the narrative move swiftly.

The technique of *The Adventures of Augie March* seems to be the least confessional of all Bellow novels in its texture. Yet we find Augie as plagued by doubts and as lonely as the other Bellow heroes. The hero recalls his past experience which diffuses his point of view and gives the narrative a subjective kind of intimacy, though it is tacitly assumed by the reader that the picaresque does not consciously 'write' his own story. To speak in the voice of the confessional, the character has to discard "presentation self" (i.e. to borrow a phrase from the behavioral scientists) that he wears for the society. Confessional literature has to assault this "presentation self" obliquely, as Bellow asserts in "Where Do We Go From Here: the Future of Fiction".<sup>7</sup> The entire solidity and texture of *Augie March* rests on the muscular strength of Augie's private language. His style is that of a typical ghetto-reared Jew, responding in a mock-epic tone to the paradoxes of life, so indispensable to the format of the picaresque.

Bellow's next novel, *Seize the Day*, gives the impression of having grown out of the confusions created by the agonized consciousness of Tommy Wilhelm. This novel has what can be, for want of a better term, called 'honesty' in its technique of the confessional strain, for within the assumed third-person narrative of this novel, Tommy finds it easier than Joseph did with his diary to reveal his areas of vulnerability.

The novel is an uncomfortable experience in the way we get too close to Tommy as he unloads his consciousness into the uninhibited narrative. It gives him a chance to be face to face with himself and the prowess is analogous to what Albert Camus says in *The Myth of Sisyphus and other Essays* as "the constant confrontation between man and his own obscurity". By a curious paradox, Tommy's personal sense of failure becomes a general vision of failure in this world consumed by 'becoming' as Joseph noted early in *Dangling Man*. The result is nightmarish.

Eugene Henderson of *Henderson the Rain King* feels burdened by the weight of himself and acts under the inner compulsion to unload it onto the narrative. When he does that, the novel slowly and subtly gets a phenomenological texture. Henderson with his Titanic

size is what one may call a very "physical" person, and because he gets into a confessional frame of mind, the novel receives a curiously anthropological slant. Under the surface relief and abandon of the novel, we note the titular hero's submerged world of doubts, uncertainties and misplaced values, such as we found in *Seize the Day*. The differences, however, are obvious—Henderson is more articulate than Tommy, verbally and physically, the pitch is loud here, and the accent is on the exaggerated excitation of the Self, almost out of proportion to the stimuli that started it all. This brings us to the constructive part of the confessional. In the process of expressing itself, a consciousness necessarily alters a few norms of truth and creates its own. Of what creative use could this Self be? For a novelist like Bellow, who is particularly equipped to help his hero grapple with the "dark brother" within himself and find a context, it could mean the creation of another generic form, call it what we will—the episodic romance, or romance autobiography, or 'quest' allegory. Henderson is a giant in everything. When he grieves his wife Lily remarks, "Gene, when you suffer, you suffer harder than any person I saw". As a positive forward-thrusting character, he animates the cognitive and conative motifs. Yes the sense of it all in the end is only that which Henderson makes on his own, on a purely personal basis. He tells us about that "noumenal department" where we "create and create and create" till as he says, the truth he knows is "filled, flowing, floating with my own resemblances". It is less important to know if Henderson's holiday in Africa is physically realized, or if it is only analogous to "a Jungian consciousness" as Walter Allen maintains in *Tradition and Dream*. What we note unmistakably is that the skeletal plot grows flesh only on the dreams and desires, the fears and doubts of Henderson. In a century that assaults inner experience, Henderson and Bellow make a creative use of it. This is again done confessionally, like the mystique of Whitman's 'I' which says: "I was there, I suffered, I suffered, I conquered".

In *Herzog* the ideas and reflections of the man seep into the narrative which makes the novel a deluge of words, words, and more words. We recall Bellow explaining how the powerlessness of man forces him to have recourse to words. Herzog has the makings of a good writer, as can be seen in his numerous Notes and letters, both mailed and unmailed. By his own admission, "throb-hearted", he makes it a literary asset—"My balance comes from instability". While displaying a felicity with words, he yet seems to consider reality as something transverbal. His revelatory letters work like auto-sugges-

tions; Herzog eventually becomes Everyman with the letters slowly reaching an impersonal, almost academic tone.

In *Mr. Sammler's Planet* too the confessional strain takes us to generalisations, ideas and opinions which give the novel at times a curiously static look. Parts of the narrative read like a treatise, for Sammler likes to be cautious as well as thorough. If he speaks of the crisis in Israel, he must go further to point out how it has brought in a certain deep Orientalism, even in the German and Dutch Jewry. So we are told about Sammler in the third person—"But he himself, no matter how Brittanized or Americanized was also an Asian". Sammler's voice rises in dignity as if it were resurrected from the dead. This is one reason perhaps why we get some generalizations which go to make—indirectly, of course—some excellent urban cityscapes, where the rich men "he knew were winners in struggles of criminality, of permissible criminality", or the roads form "a soft asphalt belly rising, in which lay steaming sewer navels". Great truths are personally realized by Sammler and expressed in his own idiom in the narrative—something he cannot do in his nephew's house or outside.

*Humboldt's Gift*, Bellow's last novel to date, shows us the large American fear of death realized once again on a personal level, as it traces the parallel careers of two American writers, Charles Citrine and Von Humboldt Fleisher. In the first person narrative, we get Citrine the writer's perspective and a Jew's. He considers himself to be one of "the educated dummies" and a Jew—"It's the classic grief, and a child of immigrants like me ought to be grateful. For a Jew it's a step up." Yet this Jew is worried recurrently by preoccupations about death—whether it is the 'anonymous' death of Humboldt in the hospital morgue—"At the morgue there were no readers of modern poetry. The name Von Humboldt Fleisher meant nothing". Or he simply visualizes the grave as "a lovely cool hole". The confessional strain in this novel is unified comprehensively by the voice of Citrine the writer, who, for that reason, shows a pervading sadness in most of his remarks, as also an ability to articulate the doubting voice of humanity. To Roger Shattuk's complaint in "A Higher Selfishness" (*The New York Review*, September 18, 1975) that Citrine sounds "like an ironic ventriloquist", we can retort, "Why not?" This is no failing in the first person narrative, which gives abundant scope to express anxiety about the "dumb prick" in every great intellectual, and to preoccupations about ageing and death which reach us with startling directness. "So the coffin was enclosed and

the soil did not come directly upon it. But then, how did one get out? One didn't, didn't, didn't! You stayed, you stayed!"

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## ERRATA

- p. 9 l. 28 Insert single quotation-mark before "virtue"; (in note) read 31 for 36.
- p. 10 l. 23 Read "Shaftesbury" for "Shatesbury"
- p. 11 l. 13 Read "of" for "fo".
- p. 31 l. 30 (In note) read 10 for 16.
- p. 33 l. 27 Read "concern" for "concernt".
- p. 35 l. 8 Read "vols." for "vol's."
- p. 36 l. 9 Read "had" for "bad"
- p. 38 l. 24 Delete comma after "novel"
- p. 43 l. 6 Read "exultation" for "exultatton"
- p. 45 l. 29 Read 1848 for 1948
- p. 51 l. 1 Read "novel" for "nevel"
- p. 78 l. 36 Read XVIII for XX
- p. 85 l. 9 Read "Charles" for "Charies"
- l. 20 Read "Verlag" for "Veriag"
- l. 24 Read "y" for "p" (after "Ortega")
- l. 26 Read "London" for "Lordon"

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*Published by*

DILIP KUMAR MUKHERJEE

on behalf of the University of Calcutta

at Asutosh Building, Calcutta-700073

and printed by him at

The Pooran Press

21, Balaram Ghose Street, Calcutta-700004.

This issue has been edited by Amitabha Sinha

---

Copies are to be had of the Calcutta University Publications  
Sales Counter, Asutosh Building, Calcutta-700073.

**Vol. XV :**

**No. 2**

**1979-80**

**JOURNAL  
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Foreign : £ 1-6s. (inclusive of postage). *Single Copy* : Inland

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*Secretary, U.C.A.C.,*  
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*Place of Publication*

Ashutosh Building, Calcutta University, Calcutta-700073

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## ARTHUR : IDEA OF KINGSHIP IN SIR GAWAIN AND THE GREEN KNIGHT

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"The sepulchre of Arthur is no where to be seen, whence ancient ballads, fables that he is to come."

—William of Malmesbury.

### I

THE Gawain poet, like the Romance poet per excellence follows minutely the details of the genre. This is evident at the very beginning of the poem which opens with a traditional literary device much used by the poet's compeers. The story to be narrated is first confined within the precincts of history, real or assumed. In the next stanza the general history is narrowed down to Britain which "bred bold men, in battle exulting/Stirrers of troubles in turbulent times." (21/2/2-3) The locale is fixed when the poet informs that this is Arthur's Britain, (22/2/7). The focal point finally adjusts on the king who 'with his company came to the hall' (23/4/4), but would not eat until all were served. The whole of Fit I sticks to Arthur as the most important personnel, the presiding figure of the narrative, 'Erect stood the king, stately of mien', and after the king had been introduced briefly, but completely, the poet resumes his running commentary on the proceedings of the feast, its arrangement of seats,—and Gawain is mentioned as a matter of course placed at Guiniver's side (25/6/3) along with—

Agravain of the Hard Hand sat on the other side

Both the King's sisters sons, staunchest of knights.

Above Bishop Baldwin began the board,

And Ywain, Uriens' son ate next to him. (25/6/4-7)

So far, nothing distinguishes Gawain from the congregation of lords except that he is the king's sister's son, but then there is Agravain



too. It is once more, Arthur who, as "the governor of this gathering (29/10/22), addresses the Green Knight—

"... Sir Knight, you are certainly welcome. / I am head of this house : Arthur is my name". (31/12/24) When the stranger demands the unusual 'good sport', Arthur answers—"We'll not fail you in fight" (31/12/28). The intruder baits the court again in Arthur's name—

What, is this Arthur's house, the honour of which  
Is bruited abroad so abundantly ? (32/14/9-10).

The king himself takes up the challenge and it is only then (stz. 15) that Gawain, the hero of the narrative bows with due excuses, and thus, segregating himself from the quailing group, distinguishes himself as an individual. He volunteers to accept the game. The liege permits and in the last stanza of Fit I, we find Arthur, though "at heart astounded" summing up the situation in a genial Christmas spirit without vitiating the atmosphere with premonitions that disturb him.

Fit II, besides its conventional mediaeval description of the cycle of seasons, begins with King Arthur, providing plentifully, especially for Gawain. A rich feast and high revelry at the Round table.' (41/24/3)

In stanza 38, Gawain has to establish his identity with reference to King Arthur (55/38/4). In Fit IV, the guide while trying to describe the Green Knight tries to evoke familiar pictures,—

'And his body is bigger than the best four / In Arthur's house, or Hector, or any other. (99/84/11-12).

The green opponent reminds the quivering Gawain, of his own behaviour, once more "in the house of King Arthur" (106/91/17) and again—

"May the high Knighthood which Arthur conferred/Preserve you and save your neck, if so it avail you."

When the Green Knight misses his stroke, Gawain, in his turn reminds him of "our plight./In high King Arthur's court", to which the later agrees,—

"No one here has offered you evil discourteously,  
Contrary to the covenant made at the King's court."

(108/94/10)

Finally, the lady who had manouevered the whole game is Morgan Arthur's half-sister. The narrative ends with the King kissing the knight and comforting him as he narrates his experience,—the finale is—"Thus in the days of Arthur this exploit was achieved" (115/101/18). *SGGK*<sup>1</sup> being one of the best of the Middle English Romances thus allows Arthur to usurp so important a position that it seems Sir Gawain would be imperfect, and the Romance unfinished, if this figure had been removed from the narrative. It is the very name that lends a history to the narrative. By the time the Gawain-poet got hold of the figure, he was already established as an institution.

## II

No old English record or chronicle ever mentions the name of Arthur. From some of the less known poems and a couple of Latin chronicles which are more or less the first to refer to this later celebrity, it is quite evident that Arthur had already become an ancient tradition. Tracing back the origin of this legendary British king, we come across the *Annales Cambriae* which refers to the Battle of Mount Badon taking place in 518 where Arthur was supposed to have "carried the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ on his shoulders" and in the Battle of Camlan, in 539, 'Arthur and Medraut fell'. Yet strangely enough, the contemporary historian Gildas is absolutely silent about Arthur. However, this scantily mentioned leader appears as the 'dux bellorum' in *Historia Britonum* (A.D. 800) by Nennius. This compilation of the history and geography of Britain mentions him as 'a leader and conqueror of the Saxons in twelve battles' making more of him as a military leader than a king. It is with Nennius that the figure gains a historical veracity, but, without sacrificing his mysterious ethos which surrounded his name making it plastic enough for future extension into the realm of myths.

This mythical exploitation of the name of Arthur is to be found in a small body of Welsh literature—*Stanzas of the Graves*, contained in the *Black-Book of Caermarthen* (12th century), *The Red Book of Hergest*. *The Chair of the Sovereign in the Book of Tiesin* (13th century). These are all centred round Arthur. This Arthur is not yet the figure of the aristocratic and chivalric Romances of Norman origin.

*Yr Amherawdyr Arthur*, the welsh terminology meaning 'the Emperor Arthur', has been accepted as a remnant of English insular history.<sup>2</sup> If Arthur's historical veracity is to be sought one cannot ignore this body of Welsh literature which makes Arthur the central figure. The very choice of Arthur in preference to the other Brythonic princes may be an accident but there is also the possibility that the superior position which he held in respect to his compeers, makes him by far the most suitable choice for such a role. After the Romans left, the three chief military designations under them known as *Commes Britanniae*, *Dux Britanniarum* and *Commes Litteris Saxonici* respectively according to rank, were nativized by the Welsh. The last two were renamed *gwledig* or prince and the first which was relatively higher in position may have been named *amherawdyr* after the Latin designation *imperator*, i.e., emperor and Arthur was *Yr amherawdyr Arthur*. Nennius in *Historia Britonum* portrays Arthur in a more or less similar capacity. This might have been reason enough for the selection of Arthur as the hero. However if the reticence of Gildas about Arthur, insinuates the character's possessing nothing special, worth individual attention, then a tentative argument may be furthered to explain Arthur's monopoly. It has been assumed<sup>3</sup> that besides this historical character there might have been 'a Brythonic divinity' of the same name. If this hypothesis is true, then it is clear enough, that the two points coalescing, make Arthur the hero. Whatever might have provoked the Welsh poets to pick out Arthur, one thing is certain, they found his name and image capable of taking care of the whole realm of Welsh myths.

In his mythological identity Arthur has been taken to represent the culture hero<sup>4</sup>; and his Round Table probably signifying plenty or abundance and his various mythic exploits have been subjected to certain quasi-historic explanations. His mythic invasion to Hades described in *Taliessin*, *Kulhwch and Olwen* may be explained in terms of his conquests of Scotland, Ireland and Scandinavia. Some such reflection is found in Geoffrey's text.

The death of Arthur is shrouded in a similar kind of mystery. Arthur is mortally wounded, as we find in Geoffrey's account, but

is he carried away to he healed. The poet of *The Black Book of Caermarthen* writes :

Bet y march, Bet if guythur  
Bet y gugaun cletyfrut  
anoeth bid bet y, Arthur.<sup>6</sup>

The history of Arthur's death should best be discarded in favour of the anonymous Welsh poet's reluctance.

Whether we are prepared to see Arthur as a culture hero or as a Celtic Zeus is open to individual conviction. But it may be ascertained that through such processes of treatment Arthur had already assumed the magnitude of a God round whom many stories and legends have grown and thrived with the passage of time. The crippling credentials of history so meticulously furnished by Nennius melted away in the gradual process of transformation. Arthur had already assumed a vague mythical identity so congenial that it could accommodate any quality and quantity of probable and improbable sequences. It is the name which had become sufficient to conjure a remote world of wonder and marvel. The name became the royal seal, the sanction for the properties of magic, adventure and miracle.

From the tenth century onwards, the Normans developed a more or less amicable relationship with the Welsh and the Britons. The French jorgleurs carried away many of the Briton lais, and Welsh texts of Arthurian legends had reached Brittany and thus, prior to the Norman conquest the Normans had their acquaintance with the name of Arthur and its magic potential. Though Britain was conquered in 1066, in the poetic domain, Charlemagne, the French national hero was dethroned by Arthur prior to it. Too much familiarity with the hero of specific dates and doings bred a feeling of insufficiency, if not of contempt. However great Charlemagne might have been in the records of history, the Romanciers presented him as a king too much dependent on his peers, almost unable to take any independent decision or act on his own. Arthur was so familiar, yet shrouded himself in an air of mystery which itself was a guarantee of his greater sway. After all, Charlemagne's territory was too specific to be expanded to the realm of Imagination. Arthur, hazily seen through the magic glass of Romance would be the fittest symbol of the ideals of chivalry and romance to the sophisticated

Normans who were fascinated by the new and various tales of love, adventure and marvel which accrued to the name of Arthur.

The Romantic identity of Arthur was reinforced by Geofferey of Mounouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* which, under the camouflage of history, cultured a world of probable and improbable incidents. This blending of fact and fiction, of the real and imaginary, due to its ingenuity arrested unawares the credulity of the readers not of England alone, but of the whole of Europe. Arthur is registered as the common hero of the continent. Geofferey's compilation describes itself perfectly as a national epic coming very close to the *Aeneid* in its functional character, employing imagination to saturate the dry annals of history. Arthur becomes the common romantic inheritance of the whole of literary Europe.

William of Mallmesbury, coming some years before Geofferey and possessing a surprisingly, modern critical sense of history, lodged a vehement protest in his *Gesta Romanum*, against this kind of romantic attitude towards "a man clearly worthy". "This is that Arthur of whom the trifling of the Britons, talks such nonsense even today; a man clearly worthy not to be dreamed of in fallacious fables, but to be proclaimed in veracious histories, as one who long sustained his tottering country, and gave the shattered minds of his fellow citizens an edge for war."<sup>6</sup> Yet, Wace's *Li Romans de Brut* (1155) a French metrical Romance, drawing on Geoffrey, follows the guidelines of the source and in this poetic chronicle too, Arthur, the lord of the Knight errants is preferred to Arthur, the military personnal. The crude details of Geoffrey's work are purged by Wace, keeping in mind the sophisticated audience. Arthur finally becomes the chivalric hero of the Romances with a medieval court. Wace's *Brut* in its turn provides the source material for Layamon's *Brut*, approximately dated at the end of the twelfth century. This is perhaps the only English contribution of some importance to Arthurian literature before the fourteenth century. But the poet's awareness of Arthur's original home and British identity makes Wace's chivalric hero look very much like "an actual English monarch winning victories over his enemies" and "represent Layamon's own idea of what an English king should be"<sup>7</sup> Layamon adds details of his own yet in the huge mass of his clumsy epic, more in the nature of a saga, may be discerned an essentially English

character. The so-called 'matter of Britain' in English tongue is first celebrated by Layamon, who, inspite of all his pious patriotic desire is not totally successful in erasing the image of the supreme king of Romance. Thus, through the multi-channelled Artharian legend can be heard the distant music of a faeryland.

Arthur was gradually becoming a part of the English cultural heritage. There is something more than mere expediency in the well-known romantic sympathy for Arthur in Edward *III* and Henry *V*, which must have inclined towards a political conviction in Henry Plantagenet who was "accused of encouraging Artharian Romance as a literary basis for a new British Imperialism."<sup>8</sup> In an age that was more bourgeois than feudal, Henry *V* carried the chrvalric nostalgia even to his grave. Knlghts in black, with their lances reverted led the procession and the coffin was preceded by his horse wearing the insigna of Arthur on its harness.<sup>9</sup> Kendrick named his grandson Arthur in the hope that he would prove to be "a predestined instrument of the revival of Arthurian glories related in British history."<sup>10</sup> The hostile rection which Polydore Vergil met during the reign of Henry *VII* when he rejected all Arthurian legend as fiction, is proof enough of the fact that Arthur not only became the royal property of England, but an inseparable part of the English sensibility of the Middle ages.

It is this Arthur who is rehabilitated in England in the Fourteenth century, after the English had appreciated and accomodated the body of Romances familiarised by the Norman Conquerors and their 'Fabluosi Britones.'

### III

Most of the Jatakas<sup>12</sup> begin with a reference to a certain Brahm-adutta in whose regime the story is supposed to have taken place. There has been much doubt whether any such historical person ever ruled the kingdom of Varanasi, as claimed by so many of the stories.<sup>13</sup> But that consideration seems to be immaterial when we realise that the name has been employed more or less as a rhetorical device to locate the story in time and place and to garnish it with a flavour of affected antiquity. This name brings down the tone of the story, from the all pervasive "once—upon—a—time" flatness by

trying to accommodate the incident within the confines of assumed history. Haroon-al-Rasheed<sup>14</sup> of the *Arabian Nights*<sup>15</sup> is a similar name used for similar purpose. But he is more than a myth. His contemporary popularity, the fame of his Solomon—like wisdom and sagacity made him become the guiding character of his stories, for almost identical reasons, and in a similar capacity Vikramaditya<sup>16</sup> had been chosen to be hero of a bunch of stories called the *Vetalapancha-bingsatika*.<sup>17</sup>

These ancient cluster of stories centering round a popular hero like Brahamadutta, Haroon-al-Rashid, Vikramaditya or Arthur, share certain common features. All these characters are leaders of the people, quite popular and mainly employed, firstly, as a peg to hang tales of a great variety, secondly, to give these floating stories a habitation in time and place. Of these Brahmadutta is more or less a mythical creation, Haroon-al-Rashid, a historical figure while Vikramaditya and Arthur belong to the hinterland between history and myth. The Jatakas differ from the other groups also in that its stories spread out through much longer period or periods, while the others cover a smaller span of time and are mostly confined to a single period of history. The English Romances which celebrate the feats of Arthur's court, mostly belong to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Boccaccio's *Decameron* or Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* are also collections of assorted tales, but these hardly have any central character to work in the given capacity. In both these, the initial occasions of the tales manage to work out the over-all patterns of the poems. In the *Jatakas*, Brahmadutta is little more than a rhetorical reference, while Haroon-al-Rashid, Bikramaditya and Arthur have certain functions to fulfill. But it is to be remembered that the body of Arthurian Romances form a separate class of its own, to be distinguished from the oriental analogues because, the various Middle English Romances are not strung together to make a collection under one heading. These survive on their individual merit, not on their collective strength.

It has been more or less agreed on by critics that *SGGK* is one is one of the finest specimens of the Middle English Arthurian Romances. The poem narrates the adventures of Sir Gawain to the castle of the Green Knight and relates his predicament there. Yet,

as has been pointed out, Arthur is present throughout the poem though Sir Gawain is its hero. The incidents narrated in the poem might have happened in any region and time valid in imagination, but the name of Arthur initially settles the locale which helps the audience to conjure up the time-character of the story, and the little details of dress, decorations and architecture make it clear that this is the fourteenth-century Arthur.

The introduction of Arthur also determines the social character of the poem. He is the head of the house, the Governor of the gang as the Green Knight addresses him. He speaks for all — “we’ll not fail”,—as the spokesman of the group of which the hero, i.e., Gawain, is a part. The Gawain-poet never emphasises Arthur as an individual existing for himself, he is always seen from the social perspective. Arthur, whenever he appears in the poem, represents his group. This group is the locus of knowledge and experience far exceeding that of the individual member. It is in the group that experience is pooled and generations linked. So the Green Knight challenges the gathering, and as the head of the group, Arthur has to accept the challenge; and when Gawain comes back from his adventure he has to narrate his plight which would add to the common store of experience and the girdle is adopted by the group as a symbol of their shame and victory. Arthur has been used as the recognized leader of the troop which must learn correct behaviour, which in its turn requires social discipline<sup>18</sup>. This social discipline is manifest in Gawain’s choice of the game<sup>19</sup>. Arthur is here no mere peg to hang the tale, but he positively invests the story with a social bearing. He is the authority.<sup>20</sup>

The term *authority* is to be traced back to its Latin root *auctor* signifying the agent whose identifying capacity was his *auctoritas*. Arthur is the identifying clue, the known landmark. The Green knight addresses the court of Arthur, they talk about the best four in king Arthur’s Court,—

‘And his body is bigger than the best four,  
In Arthur’s house, or Hector, or any other.

(99/84/11-12),

about the covenant made at the king’s court (108/94/10). The Romans had three categorical ideas of authority. In the incremen-



tal capacity the term was the extra-confirmation or guarantee of a transaction which added to its normal legal sanction by a special responsibility of one party in the transaction. The tryst is made at Arthur's court and it is held sacred as is confirmed by the Green-knight who promises to do nothing 'Contrary to the covenant made at King Arthur's court' (108/94/10). The authority of the trustee meant the trustee's confirmation of a ward's action which made the action legally binding and the trustee legally accountable to the ward for all resulting injuries. We are to remember that though the poem has for its hero Gawain, the game or challenge was not originally intended for him,—it was for anyone of the knights belonging to King Arthur's court. This generalisation presupposes the characteristic uniformity of a group who share some common traits which are supposed to be summed up by Arthur. In this fiduciary role Arthur permits Gawain to accept the game, arranges a feast in his honour and finally bids Gawain to narrate his tale when he returns to the court. Significantly enough, the poem ends where it began,—at the court of King Arthur.

#### IV

This neat circular finish of the poem may be indicative of the semblance of the social poise or uniformity which is necessary for the smooth running of a kingdom. Moreover, the fact that the tryst which began at King Arthur's court on a Christmas eve ends at the very same place of initiation also speaks of the artistic unity of the poem. But in between the beginning and the end of the major theme comes a minor scene which may be conveniently called the Temptation scene. In a very similar spirit of jovial festivity (as in the initial section), quite casually Gawain agrees to a second tryst, apparently almost a childish one. The host of the castle, and Gawain are to exchange their daily winnings for the subsequent three days. "Successive hunts, of deer, boar and fox, take place while the host's wife, in three visits Gawain's bedroom, attempts his chastity, but gains no more than kisses, which Gawain duly gives to his host at the end of each day, in exchange for the trophies of the hunt. But during the third interview the Lady, after giving up the attempt to seduce Gawain, persuades him to accept her

girdle, which she says will protect his life. Gawain conceals the gift from the lord".<sup>21</sup> Curiously enough, Fit III is the only one out of the total four, which does not mention or refer to Arthur in any context. This seems to be the Gawain-poets' conscious omission and this also indicates the limit of Arthur's authority. Gawain is always a representative of King Arthur's court. The tryst which he agrees to, at the castle of his host, is undertaken on an individual capacity. It is Gawain's responsibility. Moreover, in the bed-chamber of the castle, when the host is out hunting and the other occupants are fast asleep, Gawain is very much an individual in his own merit. Yet his own court or class-culture helps him to resist the provocations of the lady. But when it comes to the green girdle we see how the lust for life pulls down the facade to reveal the real self, the true individual who is akin to animal where the primary urges of life (like self-preservation) are concerned. It is precisely on this ground that Gawain is out of society's reach, this is where Arthur's dictates are not valid. The culture of the court is not strong enough to persuade Gawain to refuse the girdle, or surrender it to his host. This deliberate absence of the name of Arthur, then, in Fit III may be the poet's version of the limitation of authority.

#### REFERENCES

All text references are from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* : Penguin trans. Translated by Brian Stone

1. Abbreviation for *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.
  2. J. Rhys : *Arthurian Legend*, pp 7,
  3. *ibid*, pp. 8.
  4. For a detailed discussion on Arthur in this capacity see the above mentioned book.
  5. 'A grave for March, a grave for Gwythur  
A grave for Gwgawn of the ruddy sword,  
Not wise (the thought) a grave for Arthur.
  6. E. K. Chambers (trans) : *Arthur of Britain*.
  7. Margaret J. C. Reid : *The Arthurian Legend*, pp. 20.
  8. Charles Homer Haskins : *The Renaissance of the Twelfth century*, pp. 260.
  9. Walter F. Schirmer : *John Lydgate*, p. 42m 68-9.
  10. Kendrick : *Antiquity*, P. 14.
  11. *ibid* : p. 38.
- J. D. Mackie : *The Earlier Tudors*, pp. 27,

12. Jātākas : a collection of tales connected with the various incarnations of Budha. Date uncertain.
13. 372 stories out of the 547 Jātākas are said to have taken place in Varanasi. See the introduction to the translation by Ishan Ch. Ghosh, in his own lang. pp. 9.
14. (763-809), almost an exact contemporary of Charlemagne, with whom he was supposed to have an amicable relationship.
15. 'A collection of stories written in Arabic. Exact date uncertain, but it is mentioned by Masudi in A.D. 944. Probably collected in Egypt, sometime in the 14th—16th centuries.
16. The king who answers the questions of the Vetālā. The question appears at the end of each story.
17. Date uncertain. Originally part of a distinct cycle. See A. B. Keith : A History of Sanskrit Literature. pp. 288.
18. Joan Robinson : Freedom and Necessity.
19. See my essay on 'The Faultless freke.....' 'Journal of the Dept. of Eng., C. U. Vol. XIV. No. 1, 1978-79. Suniti Chatterjee Memorial No.
20. Dictionary of the History of Ideas : Charles Scribner's Sons, Publishers.
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## A NOTE ON 'TWELFTH NIGHT' AND SHAKESPEARE'S IDEA OF COMEDY

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SURABHI BANERJEE

ALTHOUGH Hamlet defined the purpose of stage-performance, thus : "It's end both at the first and now, was, and is to hold, as't were the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure", in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* Quince sums up the whole purpose of comedy by proclaiming that "Our true intent is all for your delight". Quince's dramatic statement epitomizes the characteristic Shakespearean attitude to his romantic comedies.

Northrop Frye writes in his *Anatomy of Criticism*, that Shakespearean romantic comedy, "The drama of the green world", follows a tradition established by Peele and developed by Greene and Lyly, which has affinities with the mediaeval tradition of the seasonal ritual play. According to Barber<sup>1</sup>, however, this comedy is Saturnalian, more akin to Aristophanes than to Latin Comedy, best interpreted in terms of a holiday release, as the whole experience in such comedies, is like that of revel. For instance, Sir Toby as the Lord of Misrule actually follows the pattern of contemporary revels at Twelfth Night.

Shakespeare modified and supplemented whatever he inherited from conventional patterns of comedy as is evident from his continual experimentation in comic structure. He seems to have constantly searched for an adequate technique, and evidently he was never totally satisfied with the basic formula of intrigue comedies or with the purely narrative type of comedy.

In order to understand the exact nature of *Twelfth Night*, one must briefly take into account the evolution of Shakespeare's comedies.

In the general pattern that emerges from our chronological survey of the comedies, there are four distinct phases. First, there

are the experimental plays like *Love's Labour's Lost* and *Comedy of Errors*, exploiting mainly the Plautine *The Twin Menaechmi* comic predicament. Secondly, there is the maturer phase of the middle comedies like *As You Like It*, *Much Ado* and *Twelfth Night* with greater subtlety in characterisation and multiplicity of plots. Then came the dark comedies *Measure for Measure* and *All's Well* anticipating the last stage and the dramatic romances, *Pericles*, *Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*.

Of the early experiments, *Love's Labour's Lost* is a superb tour de force of the early Shakespeare's verbal felicity with character prone to feast and surfeit on words; the paucity of action and the playwright's youthful delight in foppery of delicate dressed up language, 'taffeta-phrases and three-piled hyperboles'—prove that the interest of the play lies in the formal, elegant and festive elaboration of a meagre theme, rather than in plausibility of plot or individual motivation. The proposed one year's abstinence from love is ridiculed for its unreality and the point of this kind of gulling is that it ridicules the idea that people can do without love—which makes love central and thus gives a romantic bias to the otherwise Jonsonian gulling of folly.

*The Comedy of Errors* based on Plautus's *Menaechmi* with subsidiary themes from other plays of Plautus, deals mainly with the complications arising from the confusion of identities and so can be described as a comedy of incident. Although it has some of the romance themes exploited later in *Pericles* and a range of imagery and emotions that go beyond the Plautine influence expanded and reinforced by a Renaissance Italian influence of the *Commedia dell'Arte*, is manifest in the *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Taming of the Shrew*. The great hiatus between the verbal wizardry of the earlier comedies like *Love's Labour's Lost* and the craftmanship in the middle comedies, is obvious. In the unification of the prevalent comic traditions and the evolution of a new pattern, lies Shakespeare's unique contribution to comic structure.

A comedy like *Twelfth Night* establishes the fact that the playwright not only worked effectively within the contemporary comic tradition, but enlarged it to encompass a rich and harmonious development of comic material. It is the climax of Shakespeare's achievement in Comedy, for all the effects and values of the earlier

comedies are distilled and crystallized here in the most complex structure, the prodigality of plots, the protean variety of incidents add the subtle interweaving of various conflicting ideological strands. It offers a kaleidoscopic perspective of dramatic action ranging from the low comedy of the riotous band and noisy catch of Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, through the high romance of Viola's disguised declaration of genuine love for Orsino, to the searching interplay of illusion and reality, the spokesman of which is Feste, the Fool.

*Twelfth Night* is a combination of various theatrical and literary traditions, for apart from exploiting the essential Plautine error-motif, the playwright drew on a prose-romance, Riche's *Apollonius and Silla*, which augments the Plautine comic structure. In fact, all the happy comedies are all replete with incidents leading to the resolution of all confusion and misunderstanding through a happy catastrophe. Shakespearean romantic comedy emphasises the joyful and conciliatory element rather than the corrective as in a Jonsonian Comedy.

Shakespeare's idea of romantic comedy is incompatible with the Jonsonian 'Humour' comedies which embody the Bergsonian concept of laughter in its depiction of "deeds and language such as man do use", "an image of the time", where the main "humour" character undergoes a therapeutic experience and is thereby corrected.<sup>2</sup>

*Twelfth Night* has a few points of superficial resemblance with the comedy of Humours, in the characterological extremes of its dramatis personae, in the "gulling" relationship between Sir Toby and Sir Andrew, the Jonsonian victimizer and gull, and in the character of Malvolio.

The play also looks forward to the dramatic romances, for the note of buoyant Illyrian revelry is impregnated with an awareness of its limitations, of reality being appearance—a recurrent motif in the Last Plays. Illusion ranges from the conventional role-playing behaviour of the young gentlemen of *Verona* through the romance-episodes of *Mid Summer Night's Dream*, to the fantasies of Orsino. The staple of *Twelfth Night* is illusion, error and deceit stemming from the chance of mistaken identities. On a literal level the illusion is inherent in all the main characters; and opposed to 'illusion' is 'reality'—which can be described as a tentative attempt at defining the truth or the inexorable facts of existence, that must challenge fantasy and errors in all their forms, even in comedy.

For the Elizabethan audience, the relation of illusion to reality was a dynamic one, for the play, holding a mirror up to nature, was bound to reflect the reality represented by the audience. Yet this audience is also persuaded to recognize the intrusion of illusion upon its own domain. The frequent use of play-metaphor in Elizabethan plays and the Globe's motto "Totus mundus agit histrionen" reveal this awareness.<sup>8</sup>

Running through Shakespeare's comedies is the unifying structural principle or at least the predominant motif which Evans<sup>4</sup> calls a 'discrepant awareness', where the humour springs from the exploitable gulf between the participant's understanding and ours. In the romantic comedies "error" constitutes a central motif of action where the audience knows all and all the characters are in the dark. Although basically this comic situation goes back to Plautus's *Menaechmi*, in Shakespeare's plays it is integrated with the tension between appearance and reality. From *Twelfth Night* to *Tempest* the underlying idea is that to see reality as merely process is to take upon oneself the limitations that circumscribe process. Life, so envisioned, becomes no more than the 'Stuff' of which dreams are made and the process "an unsubstantial pageant".

The complications, camouflage and disguise which form an essential constituent of the romantic comedies are a reflection of Shakespeare's life-long preoccupation with seeming, with the falsity of appearance beneath which human beings conceal themselves from their personality or from the intricacies of their own nature. Closely allied with it is the theme of 'errors' and 'deceits' arising out of mistaken identities. It is significant that the playwright uses the conventional Elizabethan dramatic device of masking a disguise as an expression of the interaction between illusion and reality. A mask is a major instrument in the process of self-realisation. Even in *Love's Labour's Lost* there is masking accompanied by a delicate and intangible movement toward an acceptance of reality; the theme of the *Comedy of Errors* is the quest for identity.

In *The Taming of the Shrew*, the play's predominant theme, once again, is that of appearance and reality. Likewise, in *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the image-cluster comprising 'idol', 'image', 'figure', is significant in its relation to the central motif of the play, which is a projection of the ideas of illusion and mutability. So the focus is again

on the world of illusion in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the play is almost baroque in its preoccupation with the twin metaphors of life as a dream and the world as a stage. In *Much Ado*, the masque reveals a pattern of penetrated disguises, the alignment of 'knowing' and 'feeling' being the core of dramatic action. *As You Like It* is also a fusion of romantic and anti-romantic structures—a demythologisation of the illusion of the Arcadian world.

*Twelfth Night* exploits the theme of comic deceit accomplished in the form of the play. Disguise and deceit operate on multifarious levels, engendering varied, complicated situations central to the main plot. Superficially, this play is based upon the conventional pattern of Plautine and Italian Renaissance Comedy, in its abundance of deceptions and disguises and in its symmetrical balance of characters. But in fact, the maskings, revelry, and foolery are of psychological rather than of physical or literal significance. For on the psychological level, the significant developments and revelations take place beneath this "sparkling surface of disguises".<sup>5</sup>

The uniqueness of *Twelfth Night* lies in the fact that though the confusion of identities provides some highly amusing episodes in the play, it is subordinate to the main interest, for it helps ultimately to afford a way out of an apparently helpless impasse. The play not only recapitulates and restates the themes handled hitherto in the earlier comedies, but it is a terminus of evolution; in its constant reminders of the fugitiveness of mirth and a sour awareness that the real winter is yet to come, the play is at once a vindication and a depreciation of romance.

In this sense, *The Tempest* may be described as the last Shakespearean Comedy which creates dramatic illusion out of the improbable events of romance to the very purpose for which Prospero within the play creates 'historic' illusion. It holds up to nature a mirror that reveals 'truths' which in the author's view man must see 'feelingly'—once again harking back to the purpose of drama as defined by Hamlet, which also echoes Sidney's formulation of "delight" and "instruction" as the two major ends of Comedy. With Prospero's appeal for applause, we return to our starting point in the principles of Shakespearean Comedy—

But that's all one, our play is done,  
and we'll strive to please you everyday.



## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* (Princeton, 1959).  
Frye's idea of Shakespearean Comedy (*Anatomy of Criticism*, Princeton, 1967 P 240), is not, however, basically incompatible with Barber's
2. G. B. Harrison, *Shakespearean Comedy*, *Stratford Papers on Shakespeare*, 1962, p 56.
3. Anne Righter—*Shakespeare and the Idea of the play* (London, 1962), p. 38.
4. G. L. Evans—*Shakespeare's Poets: The Shadow and substance of Drama*, p 43.
5. P. Williams— 'Mistakes in *Twelfth Night* and their resolutions' *PMLA*, CXXVI, 1961, pp 96.
6. D. L. Pekerson—"Tim, Tide and Tempest" *Huntingdon Library*, 1973, p 51  
The critic mainly follows Norman Rabkin's idea (in *Shakespeare and the common understanding*, N. y, 1967, p 210), that Shakespeare engages us in the naive artifice of a game, as if were and makes us recognize at the end, the game he is playing.

THE FIRST FOURTEEN LINES OF ARNOLD'S  
"DOVER BEACH"

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MANAS MUKUL DAS

The sea is calm to-night.  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits ; —on the French coast the light  
Gleams and is gone ; the cliffs of England stand,  
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.  
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air !  
Only, from the long line of spray  
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,  
Listen ! you hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,  
At their return, up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.<sup>1</sup>

THROUGH this apparently straight-forward description of the sea in the first fourteen lines of "Dover Beach", Arnold communicates a complex Victorian experience. Within an experience many emotions, thoughts, impressions, and attitudes exist simultaneously, fused into an inseparable organic whole. Moreover, the ingredients of an experience often interact to make the experience even more complex. Much Victorian poetry, for instance, expresses an experience of anguish constituted of a conflict between the intellect denying God and the heart hankering after God. If an experience which has a multi-dimensional, dialectical structure has to be communicated as an unbroken totality, not analysed and broken into bits, the medium through which it is communicated should be able to evoke simultaneously the various forces constituting the experience. A poem achieves a simultaneous evocation of the many ingredients of

an experience by weaving words into a pattern of multi-dimensional meanings.

In the stanza quoted above from "Dover Beach", "The eternal note of sadness" (l. 14) is the core around which the various feelings and thoughts evoked by the stanza are held. The experience of sadness communicated through the lines, as will be seen, is the outcome of a conflict between a desire for the beautiful, the tranquil, and the stable on the one hand, and a knowledge of ephemerality on the other. The stanza is able to evoke simultaneously, both, all that is desired, and a sense of ephemerality mocking what is desired.

The word "to-night", significantly placed at the end of the first line and emphasized by the voice pausing at the period following immediately after, makes the reader conscious of a time-span within which the sea is as Arnold describes it. Outside this time-span the sea may be different. The speaker who says, "The sea is calm to-night...straits" (ll. 1-3)—it is implied—has known nights when the sea was not calm, the tide not full, and the moon not fair. The calmness, the fullness, the fairness, howsoever desired, are transient. The present tense of verbs in the poem's opening lines, one notices, contrasts with the past tense of verbs in the lines :

The Sea of Faith

Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore

Lay...(ll. 21-23)

Thus, latent in the consciousness of the beauty described in the first stanza is the knowledge of its ephemerality. And it is in the sense of ephemerality overarching Arnold's perception of the beautiful that the dialectic of his sadness inheres. Images of a moonlit sea, light fading on a distant coast, glimmering cliffs, and moon-blanchéd land create a dreamland atmosphere. Stanza iv refers back to this scene in stanza i as "the world, which seems/To lie before us like a land of dreams" (ll. 30-31). And a dreamworld symbolizes by its very nature that which is beautiful and ephemeral. Ephemerality and beauty are again the themes emblemized by "the long line of spray" (l. 7) which is a part of the moon-blanchéd seascape.

Besides suggesting the irony of the beautiful proving ephemeral, the first stanza of "Dover Beach" also suggests the ironic coexistence of the desire for stability and the inevitability of change. In "the

cliffs of England stand" (l. 4), the image of "the cliffs" as well as the posture "stand" suggest stability. This stability, however, is rendered suspect by the "Glimmering" (l. 5) of the cliffs in the moonlight. The glimmering makes the cliffs part of "the land of dreams" (l. 31) and so dissolves their solid reality. With dreamland lights playing on the surface of the cliffs, one wonders whether their stability is real or illusive, whether, like the beauty and the calm of the night, this stability too is not evanescent. In line 6 the word "only", separated from the rest of the line by a comma, and coming after the description of a beautiful seascape, sounds almost like a warning. And before long attention is drawn to "the grating roar/Of pebbles" (ll. 9-10) which the waves continually "draw back, and fling" (l. 10) against the cliffs. The Victorian age saw the crumbling of religious certitudes which earlier ages believed imperishable and founded on rocks. The stability of such certitudes proved as much an illusion as all else. The "grating roar" is an unpleasant, vulgar reminder of the continuous process of erosion. If the cliffs are an emblem of the static, the surpassingly stable, the sea symbolizes the dynamic, the eternally changing; and in the conflict between the two the sea prevails. That in the third stanza of the poem, in place of the "cliffs" we have a quite different image of "the vast edges drear/And naked shingles of the world" (ll. 27-28) is perhaps indicative of the final outcome of the constant process of erosion. By the time the first stanza of fourteen lines comes to its end, the beautiful, the tranquil, and the stable have all been evoked, but dominated by an overarching sense of transience. Flux is the only reality. Everything is a beginning, a ceasing, and another beginning, and these beginnings and ceasings are emblemized by the eternally moving waves continually drawing back and flinging the pebbles and eroding the cliffs. Because the sea emblemizes the passing away of all things, its "tremulous cadence slow" (l. 13) gets identified with the "eternal note of sadness" (l. 14).

Another dimension—an element of stoic composure is added to the complexity of the experience communicated through the stanza by the slow, poised rhythm of the lines holding the sadness under control. Though the poet talks of eternal sadness his voice stays unagitated. The sentimental, imploring self-pity of "Ah, love,

let us be true / To one another !" (ll. 29-30) is the fault of a later stanza. Here, the voice, even when addressing the woman loved, is beautifully quiet : "Come to the window, sweet is the night-air !" (l.6).

The invitation to come to the window becomes significant otherwise too. Arnold, watching a calm moon-blanchèd seascape and full of sad reflections upon the "Sea of Faith" (l.21) that has ebbed away, wishes to share the experience of beauty this night with someone. Besides suffering a breakdown of religious faith the Victorians had also to suffer what I. A. Richards in *Science and Poetry* called "the neutralization of nature."<sup>2</sup> Unlike the Romantic poets, the Victorians were unable to be in direct communion with nature because for them it had become a despiritualized, neutral entity. So Arnold, wishing to share the beauty of the night evoking in him the anguish of the Victorian loss, has to share it with someone from the human world. While Shelley in his "Ode to the West Wind" could say to the Wind, "Be thou, spirit fierce, / My spirit ! Be thou me, impetuous one !" (ll. 61-62), Arnold could not establish a similar identity with the sea. In line 6 of "Dover Beach", perhaps even the image of "the window" has significance. The window frames out nature and imposes between the poet and the sea the psychological distance separating observer and observed. Watching becomes here a gesture of the alienated and shows Arnold estranged from nature. Sensitive to the beauty of the sea he yet responds to it with anguish because, for him, the beauty of the surface is not sustained by a deeper spiritual beauty. He can only watch the beauty of nature distantly through a window and share that inanimate beauty with someone from the human world.

We have discovered in the opening stanza of "Dover Beach" various feelings and thoughts that in their simultaneous working constitute the complex Victorian 'religious' sensibility : a nostalgia for the beautiful and the calm at the spiritual level of existence ; a sense of old stabilities crumbling ; a sense of eternal sadness at the core of all existence because existence is characterized by change ; an intense awareness of natural beauty, but in a transient, neutral universe ; a desire to share this beauty with someone in the human

world ; and a restraining stoicism controlling the voice expressing the grief of existence. The experience communicated through the poem is still further complicated and enriched by the situation, built into the poem, in which the lines are spoken.

"Dover Beach" is not addressed to the reader. It is overheard by him. Except that the speaker of the lines is identifiable with Arnold, the situation is almost that of a dramatic monologue in which a lover addressing his beloved shares with her the calm beauty of a moonlit sea and the anguish of knowledge inherent in the moment, and implores that they be true to one another. "Dover Beach" is a love poem and all love is characterized by a desire to share—the sharing could as well be of a sense of anguish as of a sense of celebration. Arnold's poem does not express a sense of cosmic anguish before a neutral audience but wishes to share the anguish it expresses with a woman loved. Through the act of sharing, the expression of anguish becomes simultaneously a gesture of love, the elegy becomes a love lyric.

In the opening lines of "Dover Beach" discussed above, ideas and concepts are present dissolved in sensibility. They are not stated. Here, Arnold's world view is seen flavouring his experience and determining his attitude and style. If the lines have a fault that too is of the sensibility, the fault of an improporportionately high seriousness, the fault of Arnold's inability to respond to the beauty of a moment without first straightening out his whole cosmogony, (to modern ears) the fault of a slightly ridiculous pomposity.

The richness and multidimensional complexity of the first lines embodying a total experience is absent from the later lines where Arnold, giving up the method of poetry, adopts the method of discourse. The decline begins when the shifting symbolism of the concrete sea image (is it a symbol of beauty, calm, flux, or sadness?) of the first stanza is abandoned for the arbitrary and forced one-dimensional metaphor, "The Sea of Faith," of the third stanza. The decline is complete in :

the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain (11.30-34)

In these lines we are told what Arnold *thinks* of the world. The lines do not communicate his *experience*, and the reader remains uninvolved.

#### NOTES

1 This and all other quotations from "Dover Beach" are from *The Poems of Matthew Arnold*, ed. Kenneth Allott (London, 1965).

2 This phrase, occurring repeatedly in Richards' book, is also a chapter-heading.

## THE STRUCTURE OF *THE WASTE LAND*

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ARUP RUDRA

IT is not a little surprising to find that scholars have taken great pains to reconstruct the structure of *The Waste Land* by going back to Frazer and Weston without referring to the justification for such a structure which Eliot himself dwelt on in his essay on Dante in *The Sacred Wood*. The essay, being written before 1920, may be taken as a probable clue to the nature of the structure Eliot was interested in, while composing *The Waste Land*. In the course of pointing out the difference of *The Divine Comedy* from either epic or dramatic poetry, Eliot also saw the need for a different kind of structure for the poem. Eliot says: 'A mechanical framework, in a poem of so vast an ambit, was a necessity'.<sup>1</sup> On the next page is repeated the remark that 'the framework has to be more artificial and apparently more mechanical'.<sup>2</sup> Eliot continues:

It is not essential that the allegory or the almost unintelligible astronomy should be understood—only that its presence should be justified. The emotional structure within this scaffold is what must be understood—the structure made possible by the scaffold. This structure is an ordered scale of human emotions.<sup>3</sup>

What Eliot speaks of Dante is relevant in the understanding of Eliot himself, particularly when we remember that *The Waste Land* itself is neither epic, nor dramatic in form and has, moreover, a scaffold at the back of it.

As for the scaffold, the critics in general have either given too much importance to it or have ignored it completely, resulting either in stilted interpretations (as in Grover Smith's *T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning*) or in purely subjective explications (as in Lawrence Durrell's *Key to Modern Poetry*). Grover Smith, in fact, tries to pin the poem down to its sources in



an endeavour to seek a neat evolving pattern of the poem, forgetting in his enthusiasm that Eliot was not so much interested in poetic rendering of the myth as in using the sources by way of a scaffold to make the existence of the poem possible. The other extreme type of criticism is exemplified in Durrell who does not take notice of the scaffold at all and interprets the poem as employing the techniques of the modern cinema. The cinematic technique might have been present at the back of Eliot's mind, but that does not explain the need for the scaffold or the mythical background. The insistence on the cinematic structure is to be found in A. J. Wilks's *T. S. Eliot and The Waste Land*<sup>4</sup> also. Wilks says :

Recent cinema and more ambitious television productions provide an illuminating commentary on the structure of 'The Waste Land'. We now take for granted the elliptical techniques of flashbacks, cross-cutting, unannounced dream sequences and unexplained visual analogies.<sup>5</sup>

*The Waste Land*, then, is compared with Antonioni's film 'The Red Desert'. According to Wilks, 'unconnected fragments'<sup>6</sup> are assembled to 'form a pattern.'<sup>7</sup> Wilks, unfortunately, takes for structure what is actually technique. Another venture, in an effort to explain the structure of *The Waste Land*, is to be found in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*,<sup>8</sup> where Jacob Korg contends that Eliot has borrowed the technique of the Cubist painters to give an abstract structure to *The Waste Land*. But Korg does not take into account the interaction of 'emotional effects' in the poem. The emotional effects have been taken into consideration, however, by Gertrude Patterson<sup>9</sup>. Patterson concentrates on the 'fragmentary method' of Eliot in explaining the structure of *The Waste Land*. According to her, Eliot's poems are fragments in action ; Patterson has analysed the nature and function of 'emotions' in Eliot's poetry, but fails to justify either the presence of the scaffold or the 'incidental symbolism'.

In a controversial article W. H. Pritchard uses Eliot's comments on Ben Jonson to get at the centre of *The Waste Land*. Mr. Pritchard deserves to be quoted at length, particularly because his comments are an indication of a certain tendency to dismiss the poem as superficial, Pritchard says ;

Let us therefore appropriate Eliot's language about Jonson and apply it to *The Waste Land* : the poem then became a titanic show, run by a showman who draws upon resources in the language.. of great power and energy. In this titanic show, characters and scenes are drawn in strong and simple outlines ; a solid superficies presents itself for inspection, behind which no murky and ambiguous depths beckon to be plumbed. If this showman is a satirist he is a creative one, his satire only incidentally a criticism of life, of the actual "modern" world and springing from no precise intellectual criticism of that world. To read such a poem adequately, we must become correspondingly creative, our criticism of the poem a commentary on experiencing the imaginative life of a particular artifact. We cannot fall back on what Eliot is saying about the Modern World, because that 'saying' is wholly identified with the order of words that is *The Waste Land*. And efforts to extract meanings from the poem by translating events into more general intellectual and symbolic terms would be performed at the peril of making the tenuous and indirect relation between poem and world much more direct than it is.<sup>10</sup>

Mr Pritchard's is a counsel of despair in that he would like the reader to be satisfied by a 'solid superficies', ignoring all the multiple layers of emotive and intellectual significance issuing out of the rich allusiveness of the poem. Pritchard, moreover, has made use of Eliot's dramatic critism in order to foist it on a poem which is obviously not a drama. In fact, Mr Pritchard has overlooked the references to Dante and Shakespeare in the essay on *Ben Jonson*—references which are extremely significant when we come to talk about *The Waste Land*.

'The immediate appeal of Jonson', Eliot says, 'is to the mind, his emotional tone is not in the single verse, but in the design of the whole.' Eliot was a lover of 'design', but that is not at all. He was a lover of 'detail' too. In the same essay on Jonson, Eliot comments :

Shakespeare, and smaller men also, are in the end more difficult, but they offer something at the start to encourage the student or to satisfy those who want nothing more ; they are suggestive, evocative, a phrase, a voice ; they offer poetry in detail as well as in design. So does Dante offer something,

a phrase everywhere (*tu se' ombra ed ombra vedi*) even to readers who have no Italian; and Dante and Shakespeare have poetry of design as well as of detail.<sup>12</sup>

In the light of the above quotation, it would be more reasonable to go to Dante or Shakespeare, rather than to Jonson in search for a probable literary ancestor so far as *The Waste Land* is concerned. A form of recent criticism of *The Waste Land* which does away with 'structure' altogether needs to be mentioned at this stage. One of the most influential recent commentaries on *The Waste Land* (by G. K. Stead) underplays the existence of the 'structure' at the expense of the 'texture'. According to Mr Stead, *The Waste Land* is a type of poetry in which 'texture' is all important and 'structure' only a shadow. The 'structure' that Stead would allow the poem is like that of a Bach fugue. He comments: "*The Waste Land* is likely to seem poetry aspiring to the condition of music. 'Structure like that of a Bach fugue' (as Yeats says in surprise at Pound's Cantos); '...no plot, no chronicle of events, no logic of discourse'<sup>13</sup>. In so far as Mr Stead criticizes the the critics of Eliot, who are eager to impose a neat intellectual scheme on the poem, he is on solid ground, but in his own enthusiasm to carry his thesis, in the first place he has contradicted himself, and in the second, reduced Eliot to the automatic school of poets. In order to drive his point home, Stead makes a comparison between Eliot and Coleridge. He observes: "If one contemplates *The Waste Land* long enough it can seem the most uncompromising poetry ever written in English, wrung, like *Kubla Khan*, from a mind so confident in abstract discourse, so capable of 'explaining' itself, that the procession of non-discursive images could only have been achieved by a discipline amounting to self-annihilation. What opium or some rarely attained dream state precipitated in Coleridge in 1797 (*pace* Miss Elisabeth Schneider) a 'breakdown' precipitated more thoroughly in Eliot in the winter of 1921. In each case we face a kind of poetry that has seldom appeared in our literature—a pure, non-discursive Image—and we must speak about it accordingly"<sup>14</sup>.

Two comments by Eliot contradict, however, what Mr Stead is driving at. Regarding *Kubla Khan* Eliot said: "The imagery of that fragment, certainly, whatever its origin in Coleridge's reading,

sank to the depths of Coleridge's feeling, was saturated, transformed there—'those are pearls that were his eyes'—and brought up into daylight again. But it is not *used*: the poem has not been written... Organization is necessary as well as 'inspiration.'<sup>15</sup> The second comment is from *Poe to Valéry* :

Yet it is only in a poem of some length that a variety of moods can be expressed, for a variety of moods requires a number of different themes or subjects, related either in themselves or in the mind of the poet.<sup>16</sup>

Mr Stead, while analysing Eliot's criticism in chapter six of *The New Poetic*, is aware of the complementary aspects of Eliot's notion of the poetic process—'design' as well as 'detail'—but getting down to talk about *The Waste Land*, he only emphasizes the 'detail'. The 'intellect', the 'conscious' element in creativity is relegated to the backroom of sub-editing. This ultimately gives us only a tilted version of *The Waste Land*—a poem of meandering moods without any structure whatsoever. Stead, however, is not alone in his desire to see *The Waste Land* as a poem of texture. As late as 1973 we find Graham Hough repeating almost the same words :

When people say they find a deep organic unity in *The Waste Land* what they mean is that they have got used to it. We know now that the arguments adduced in its defence during the controversial years were almost all off the mark. It is not an elliptical narrative with connecting links missed out. It is not to be homogenised by reference to fertility myths. Its major form is hardly the result of conscious design at all, and what conscious design there is, is not the author's. The difficulties are still there as they always were, but they have ceased to matter. We have stopped looking for principles of organisation that are clearly absent. We respond to the poetry in detail, to the sombreness and brilliance of its images, to precisions and incantations of its verbal surface...<sup>17</sup>

A consideration of the important critical literature on *The Waste Land* reveals that the poem is either presumed to have a 'structure' in terms of the scaffold or simply a 'texture'. Eliot himself has contributed to the critical confusion by applying the word 'structure' rather loosely with reference to the poem. In the interview with *Paris Review* in 1969 he claimed the *The Waste Land* was 'just

as structureless, only in a more futile way' before Pound's intervention.<sup>18</sup> Eliot was referring really to the absence of a conventional structure in the poem. What Eliot leaves unsaid is complemented by Pound. In 1924, Pound said, 'I did not see the notes till six or eight months afterwards ; and they have not increased my enjoyment of the poem one atom. The poem seems to me an emotional unit...I have not read Miss Weston's *Ritual to Romance* and does not at present intend to.'<sup>19</sup> Pound's comment reminds us of Eliot's observation about Dante's *Divine Comedy*—'the almost unintelligible astronomy'<sup>20</sup> at the back of the poem.

In a very recent article in PMLA, Marjorie Donker has drawn our attention to the Virgilian element in *The Waste Land*. Donker's perceptive study makes detailed comparison between the *Aeneid* and *The Waste Land* with the intention of focussing the readers' attention on the nature of the scheme of Eliot's poem.

A number of critics have noted important relationships between the *Aeneid* and *The Waste Land*. It is generally accepted, for example, that the two poems share a particular mythic configuration, a pattern of quest that involves descent into and return from an experience of mystery and sacred knowledge.<sup>21</sup>

Donker goes even further, however :

It is the proposition of this essay, however, that *The Waste Land* is even more consciously Virgilian than has yet been recognized and that there are many connections, specifically literary connections, yet unexplored between the two poems. It is not an exaggeration to say that the existence of the *Aeneid*, the central importance of the *Aeneid*, is one of the assumptions of Eliot's poem and that if *The Waste Land* is a trip through hell, Virgil guides Eliot as he once guided Dante.<sup>22</sup>

Donker's analysis is a bit schematic and does not throw much light on the emotional structure of the poem. We should rather turn to Dante for a real understanding of the structure of *The Waste Land*. The influence of Dante on Eliot has been too obvious to be emphasized. But none of the scholars has moved beyond the pale of thematic and stylistic considerations. Eliot's 1929 essay and 1950 lecture on Dante have been frequently referred to, but the 1920

article has not received as much prominence as it deserves. The 1920 article, in fact, is nearer to *The Waste Land* and consequently nearer to the spirit of the poem. In that article Eliot has laid emphasis on the scaffold, the emotive quality of the individual episodes and finally a structure of emotional units existing within the scaffold. Although the scope as also the final impact of the modern poem is different from the medieval composition we might take Eliot's comments on Dante as a clue to the appreciation of *The Waste Land*. The last sentence of Eliot's 1920 article on Dante is particularly illuminating :

When most of our modern poets confine themselves to what they had perceived, they produce for us, usually, only odds and ends of still life and stage properties ; but that does not imply so much that the method of Dante is obsolete, as that our vision is perhaps comparatively restricted.<sup>23</sup>

My point is not, however, that Eliot was merely imitating Dante but that he discovered in Dante something which was extremely helpful in writing a long poem. Eliot probably saw in Dante a method by which a poem could be held within limits and be a meaningful totality. It may be assumed that Eliot, much like Dante making use of allegory and astronomy, used the fertility myths borrowed from Weston and Frazer, as a framework. Helen Williams is right when she observes that their 'technical function seems to have been even more important to him than their symbolic meaning.'<sup>24</sup> By allowing the back-cloth of mythology to hold the poem in shape, Eliot, like Dante, concentrated on building up a 'structure' which is 'an ordered scale of human emotions'.<sup>25</sup> Critics and readers like Mr Pritchard who complain of the lack of depth in Eliot's characterization should note Eliot's comparative analysis of the presentation of 'emotion' by Dante and Shakespeare :

Dante's method of dealing with any emotion may be contrasted, not so appositely with that of other "epic" poets as with that of Shakespeare. Shakespeare takes a character apparently controlled by a simple emotion, and analyses the character and the emotion itself. The emotion is split up into constituents and perhaps destroyed in the process. The mind of Shakespeare was one of the most *critical* that has ever

existed. Dante, on the other hand, does not analyse the emotion so much as he exhibits its relation to other emotions.<sup>26</sup>

Obviously, Eliot's method is different from Shakespeare's. But if we look into the episodes of *The Waste Land*, we shall discover that Eliot shows the relation of one episodic emotion to another till a significant structure evolves. Even here, it may be noted, Eliot makes a significant variation. In Dante we find a particular emotion inhering in one episode or character. For example, when Francesca recounts her story, there is both agony and ecstasy in her. This is how Eliot looks at the situation :

To have lost all recollected delight would have been, for Francesca, either loss of humanity or relief from damnation. The ecstasy, with present thrill at the remembrance of it, is a part of the torture. Francesca is neither stupefied nor reformed, she is merely damned, and it is a part of damnation to experience desires that we can no longer gratify. For, in Dante's Hell souls are not deadened, as they mostly are in life, they are actually in the greatest torment of which each is capable.<sup>27</sup>

In Eliot's *The Waste Land*, the ecstasy, agony and the disgust are split up and left to the readers' imagination to be co-related. The way it is done is one of the most interesting features of *The Waste Land*. Let us take, for example, the most well-known episodes of the encounter between the typist and the young man carbuncular. Apparently, it is a description of a mechanical intercourse between two semi-automatic figures, evoking merely disgust. Eliot, however, keeps the 'agony' of such loveless encounter for Tiresias who foresuffers all. In the course of the description, Tiresias is squeezed in at the most crucial moments. The agony contained in the encounter is thus subtly passed on to the reader through Tiresias. At the moment of feeling this 'agony' the sensitive reader will be aware of the lost possibility of ecstatic love presented in *The Burial of the Dead* through the hyacinth girl episode.

It may be said that, like Dante, Eliot has also dealt with disgust, agony and ecstasy ; but Eliot's method of presenting these emotions is more subtle and complex. The agony is made significant and unbearable, by 'memory' on the one hand, and 'desire' on the other. Memory is related to the past, while 'desire' gropes towards the future. The people of the Waste Land are in a state of half-life and

their state of death-in life is intensified by memory and desire. The ineffable, inexpressible state of possible fulfilment is embodied in the heart of light, the silence, for example. That is why, an imaginative reading of *The Waste Land* makes the hyacinth-girl episode a central one, round which all the loveless episodes seem to revolve. It may be observed, incidentally, that this was a favourite technique of Eliot. In the *Four Quartets*, for example, we note a few images which haunt us throughout our reading of the poem and which moreover have a centrality of meaning. We might refer to the rose-garden images and the laughter of children among the leaves.

It is one of the structural characteristics of *The Waste Land* that it contains a number of loveless episodes. Instead of looking at them discretely, if we consider them in the light of Eliot's observation on Dante, we shall find an intensification of meaning issuing out of the ensemble. Eliot observes: 'A variety of passages might illustrate the assertion that no emotion is contemplated by Dante purely in and for itself.'<sup>28</sup> A variety of passages from *The Waste Land* might illustrate the same method.

In the *Burial of the Dead* we first encounter the frightened Maria followed by the Hyacinth girl. The fright of Maria is sharply contrasted with the easy surrender of the Hyacinth girl. In *A Game of Chess* there are two episodes equally devoid of genuine love. Artificiality is the keynote here. In *The Fire Sermon* also there are there episodes—the typist episode is followed by the Elizabeth and Leicester and then we encounter the Rhine daughters. A neat summing up of the significance of all these episodes is made in the lines :

On Margate Sands.  
I can connect  
Nothing with nothing.

The amount of space taken up by the episodes is an indication of the importance Eliot was giving to their significance. The basic theme of the poem as also the ordered scale of human emotions which is its structure is related to them. In fact, one way of reading the poem would be to realize their central importance, the rest of the poem giving us images to intensify the feeling of aridity that inheres in the episodes.



The poem opens with 'April is the cruellest month, breeding/ Lilacs out of the dead land', and after the unexpected 'shower of rain' melts into the episode of Marie and her cousin. The episode is followed by a 'heap of broken images'—the 'dry stone' and 'dead tree'. Then comes the hyacinth girl. The second part of the section reverses the order and we find Madame Sosostris followed by the crowd over London Bridge. The section closes with Stetson. *A Game of Chess* also starts with a description, 'The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne, Glowed on the marble', and goes on for more than a hundred lines. This is followed by the episode of the neurotic woman with her bad nerves and her silent companion. Just on the heels of this episode come Lil and her friends. *The Fire Sermon*, again, starts with 'The river's tent is broken'. After a fairly longish descriptive section we encounter Mr. Eugenides. Mr. Eugenides is followed by the typist episode. Then there are two short descriptions followed by Elizabeth and Leicester. After the 'burning' end of *The Fire Sermon* comes *Death by Water* which combines episode and description. It is interesting to observe that the last section, *What the Thunder Said*, is made up entirely of image and descriptions.

The alternation of 'image' and 'episode' could not possibly be fortuitous, particularly when we notice a close correspondence between the basic qualities of the two. For example, the cruelty of April which is startlingly unnatural is matched by Marie's reversal of the order of day and night. Of course, not all the descriptions are so related to the episodes. Sometimes, there are ironic relationships. The absence of water in the 'heap of broken images' is sharply contrasted with the sea in the reference to Tristan and Iseult and then with the wet hair of the hyacinth girl.

It is in the fitness of things, again, that Madame Sosostris and her cards should lead us to the 'Unreal City' and the crowd undone by death. The Stetson episode is not much of a surprise, again, if we are aware of the reference to the sprouting of the dead. There is a marvellous unity, in fact, in the *Burial of the Dead*. What started as a sonorous seriousness in breeding lilacs out of the dead land ends in macabre levity with the Dog scratching the earth. The juxtaposition of the descriptive and the episodic is everywhere meaningful in the course of the poem.

*The Waste Land*, in short, may be meaningfully responded to if we remember that the Grail Symbolism is merely a scaffold (which was necessary for the poet) to hold the poem together and that the main attraction of the poem is the interrelatedness of the episodes building up a total emotional structure. It may also help us in understanding the complexity of this structure if we keep in mind the importance of the three elements—disgust, agony, and ecstasy—which make the poem so moving.

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T. S. ELIOT : *THE FAMILY REUNION* (1939)

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KRISHNA GHOSE

*THE Family Reunion* is the first full-length play in which Eliot adapted classical drama for the modern stage. The play traces the process of Harry Monchensey's liberation from what seemed to him to be an intolerable and curse-haunted universe, and from his intense sense of sin and defilement, to a consciousness of spiritual election and consequent salvation. It was based on the *Oresteia*, and it is not difficult to see why this particular story in its Aeschylean version should have appealed to Eliot at this stage. Sophocles, in his *Electra*, is curiously impersonal in his treatment of moral issues, apportioning neither praise nor blame ; Euripides, in his *Electra* and *Orestes*, ironically challenged the accepted pieties about heroism and divine providence. Aeschylus, on the contrary, interpreted the legend of the Atridae as a drama of guilt and atonement, in which the personal situation is ultimately transcended in a vision of communal regeneration. Both Orestes and Harry are fated to fulfil a special destiny that sets them apart from their fellow men—that of purging themselves and their respective environments of spiritual pollution. In both cases, a dubious homecoming leading to the death of a mother associated with the baneful past, ends with a pilgrimage of expiation involving awareness of ethical values that relate also to society as a whole.

It is surely significant, then, that *FR* should have been written in the same year as *The Idea of a Christian Society*. There Eliot for the first time formulated a theory of social change based on revaluation of established attitudes and the affirmation of religious belief : individual and society are linked within a specific theological framework in a manner akin to that of Aeschylus. Paradoxically, it is this common concern with religious or spiritual values as the basis of social life, that sets Eliot's play apart from Aeschylus'. The different set of moral co-ordinates employed by Eliot accounts for the altered emphases on important aspects of the Greek original—

the curse, the matricide, the transformation of the Erinyes into the Eumenides (corresponding to the process of Orestes' exoneration), and the role of the protagonist.

In discussing the implications of the religious orientation of *FR*, however, it must be remembered that, unlike Aeschylus, Eliot nowhere identifies Harry's experience (which is clearly a conversion of some sort) with any particular dogma. Nevertheless, despite the use of alien concepts like "pollution" and "inherited curse", it is fairly safe to maintain that the faith hinted at in the play is Christian. The Christian basis of *FR* can be established not only from our biographical knowledge of Eliot's conversion to Anglo-Catholicism in 1927, and from explicit reference to the efficacy of Christian belief in his social and critical writing in the thirties, but from internal evidence of the play itself.

This is not merely a matter of the occasional word or phrase with Christian overtones—the description of the Eumenides as "bright angels" (p. 111), the frequent references to "humility" and "suffering" and "sacrifice" and "election", or even the suggestion that Harry is going away to become a missionary (p. 116). Eliot has very adroitly adapted the motif of the ancestral curse as a metaphor for Original Sin. Though the specific "crime" that Harry is atoning for is an individual one, he is conscious all the while of the "filthiness that lies a little deeper" (p. 99)—

...the slow stain sinks deeper through the skin  
Tainting the flesh and discolouring the bone...  
The contamination has reached the marrow. (pp 66 ; 67)

This suggestion of post-lapsarian anguish at the loss of innocence makes Harry's distress something more than a merely private feeling of guilt. The link between the Monchensey "curse" and attempted or projected murder, also serves to identify Harry's personal guilt with his guilt as created man.

Harry's involvement in the primal sin is intended to make him representative of Christian man in much the same way that the crime of Orestes involves his community. The analogy cannot be pressed too far, however. While the liberation of Orestes is synonymous with the liberation of Athens from chthonic vengeance, this is not the case in *FR*. Harry's singular awareness of damnation, of his

"share of the eternal burden" of Original Sin, actually sets him (like Becket and Celia) apart from common humanity. This importance assigned by Eliot to individual salvation (without regard to its communal bearing) is consistent with his emphasis on individual moral decision as the basis of the realization of Christian values in life—"The conception of individual liberty, for instance, must be based upon the unique importance of every single soul, the knowledge that every man is ultimately responsible for his own salvation and damnation."<sup>1</sup> Thus, while Orestes is saved through the agency of others (indicating the inter-dependence of individual and society in the Aeschylean scheme), Harry wins freedom from despair through an act of will: unlike Orestes, he needs to change, not his ethical environment, but something within himself. In this respect, *FR* is Harry's play in a way that the *Oresteia* is not Orestes'.

The changed emphasis on the protagonist, and the altered nature of the hereditary guilt which is dramatically represented through the motif of the "curse"—consequences of the different ethical orientation of Eliot's play—have repercussions also on the delineation of the Eumenides.

Their credibility in stage performance, a question that so taxed Eliot, is not so much to the point here as the way in which they help to clarify the central issue in the play—salvation through acceptance of spiritual values. In Aeschylus, the Furies change from forces of terror (the Erinyes) to instruments of benevolence (the Eumenides). In *FR* they are, from the outset, referred to as the "Eumenides" in the stage directions: in the dialogue, they are not directly named at all, but remain the indeterminate "them" or Downing's "them ghosts" (p. 119), till they are recognised by Harry as the "bright angels" whom he is destined to follow. Significantly enough, there is no reference to them even in the stage directions as the "Erinyes". For, if they are to be regarded as some kind of objectification of Christian spiritual awareness (as they surely are in *FR*, being visible only to the characters who are spiritually aware), then they can naturally not be envisaged as in any way negative. The interesting conclusion is that, while in Aeschylus it is the Furies themselves who are transfigured, in Eliot, it is Harry's attitude towards them which undergoes the change. Once again, there is the contrast between an external modification in the ethical environ-

ment of Orestes and an internal transformation within Harry. The dramatic importance of the Eumenides in *FR* lies in the way that their three successive appearances define stages in Harry's spiritual progression. They manifest themselves at crucial junctures in the play—moments when Harry is on the point of making some important moral decision. In each case, the shock of their presence forces him to revalue his choice and to probe deeper into his motivations, so that he is driven relentlessly on towards that renunciation of the world that seemed to be for Eliot a necessary prelude to redemption.<sup>2</sup>

Harry's moral problem—gradual awareness of which sets him on the way to self-knowledge and salvation—is basically a lack of charity for his fellow human beings. In his inability to love, he repeats his father's loveless marriage. Mary makes a pertinent observation when she tells Harry—

You attach yourself to loathing  
As others do to loving : an infatuation  
That's wrong, a good that's misdirected. (p. 81)

Both as a Christian and as an individual, Harry's atonement will consist in learning to accept human fallibility : only then will his final renunciation of the world be of value.

Harry's initial nightmarish sense of being unable to relate meaningfully to anything or any person was brought about by his wife's death, for which he feels guilty and responsible—"...I not a person, in a world not of persons/But only of contaminating presences" (p. 102). This mysterious "murder" (if murder it was), and its repercussions on the play, will receive further comment later. For the moment, it is sufficient to say that the incident acted as a kind of catalyst on Harry's conscience, provoking realisation of himself as part of gross, sinful, fallen humanity.

Harry's motive in returning to Wishwood (the name is significant) was to try to blot out the past, and escape into comforting childhood memories of "the nursery tea, the school holiday/The daring feats on the old pony." (p. 60) The sudden vision of the Eumenides (who appear to him here for the first time, though he had apparently sensed their presence earlier) prompts anguished questioning, in a

deliberate echo of Orestes in the *Choephores*—

Can't you see them ? You don't see them, but I see  
them,

And they see me...

They were always there. But I did not see them...

Why here ? why here ? (p. 64)

The answer, which does not become clear to him until later, is that, as potential elect, Harry will not be allowed to rest content in the comforting fantasies of his boyhood.

The conversation with Mary is important in impressing upon Harry the necessity for an internal transformation, rather than a change in environment, in order to achieve peace of mind—

What you need to alter is something inside you  
Which you can change anywhere—here, as  
well as elsewhere. (p. 80)

Mary speaks to him of the possibility of hope in the insistent symbolism of the rebirth of nature in the "cold spring". The imagery evokes, not merely the seasonal and ritual aspect of classical tragedy, but also the Christian promise of redemption through the crucifixion of Christ: "Spring is an issue of blood/A season of sacrifice" (p. 82). For a moment, Harry is attracted to Mary—she brings him "news of...sunlight and singing" (p. 82). A worldly attachment could well have diverted him from his spiritual mission. The Eumenides appear again at this point, as it were to warn him away from making compromises with the world. As opposed to their first appearance, Harry now has a new apprehension that his destiny is in some way related to these apparitions—

...when I forget them  
Only for an instant of inattention  
They are roused again, the sleepless hunters  
That will not let me sleep. (p. 83)

The resultant soul-searching helps him to recognise the spiritual vacuum in everyday life—"What you call the normal/Is merely the unreal and the unimportant." (p. 98) Through the two remaining encounters—with Warburton and with Agatha—Harry acquires insight into his true vocation,

Warburton is, of course, unaware of helping Harry towards spiritual illumination. But from him Harry gets the important hint that the key to his spiritual unease lies in the past—in the relationship between his parents. The realisation that follows is that he cannot evade the past (as he had been trying to do), but that he must understand it and accept responsibility for it.

Total comprehension comes only during the conversation with Agatha, in the course of which he experiences a moving commitment (something which had not been possible for him before) to Agatha as his spiritual mother. The result is increased compassion and charity (Christian virtues both) for his family, with whose moral obtuseness he had so far been angry and impatient—

I only now begin to have some understanding  
Of you, and of all of us...  
I might even become fonder of my mother—  
More compassionate at least— by understanding  
(p.106)

The Monchensey “curse”—lack of love, blighting human relationships—is expiated. The suggestion is that this results in some kind of spiritual deliverance—

The chain breaks...  
...and the awful evacuation  
Cleanses. (p. 107)

Now that Harry is morally equipped to apprehend higher ethical values, the Eumenides fittingly appear for the last time. In the classic paradox of faith, Harry discovers that the fulfilment of the self actually consists in submission of the self to a transcendent spiritual power, symbolized for him by the Eumenides—

Now I see at last that I am following you,  
And I know that there can be only one itinerary  
And one destination. Let us lose no time.  
I will follow. (p. 108)

The problems which arise as regards this otherwise neat Christian schematization of the action of the classical play are important enough to call in question certain basic assumptions in *FR*. They concern the *rationale* behind Harry's ‘election’, and the matter of the ‘murder’. And the problems are related to each other.



The logic of both the *Oresteia* and *FR* demands that the protagonists be paradoxically guilty as well as innocent. They must be guilty to undergo the expiatory suffering that alone can resolve the curse and bring redemption : they must be innocent so as to deserve their final states of forgiveness and enlightenment. Aeschylus solves the problem of Orestes' responsibility for blood-guilt and matricide very neatly by making his act of revenge the consequence of divine fiat and unwilling acceptance. Further, while Orestes is guilty by the codes of chthonic morality (as upheld by the Erinyes) which forbade the shedding of kindred blood under any circumstances, he is technically innocent within the dispensation of Zeus, in having obeyed Apollo. The dilemma over his culpability can thus be resolved by a reconciliation of the two orders. Orestes' piety, and his final exoneration from guilt, also make him an acceptable agent for expelling the curse from the House of Atreus.

In Eliot's play, the fact of the murder is made out to be of lesser importance than the crisis of conscience which follows it. Agatha speaks very obviously for the playwright himself when she says—What we have written is not a story of detection, Of crime and punishment, but of sin and expiation (p. 105). The problem is that, in Eliot's chosen religious framework, murder is taboo, and can have no justification whatsoever. And Harry's equivocation—"Perhaps I only dreamt I pushed her" (p. 105)—is inexplicable, since there can hardly be doubts about so positive an action, had it actually taken place. Agatha's casual "What of it?" (p. 105) is in no sense an ethical response. In the Christian view, crime in intention is as culpable as crime committed. For Harry to blur the distinction between action and intention on so vital an issue argues for some kind of neurosis or abnormality : if true, this would devalue his subsequent experiences, which purport to be emblematic of Christian salvation. Besides, in a play about the growth of spiritual awareness, it is surely indefensible to be imprecise about guilt. If Harry is guilty of murder, what special quality (except somewhat greater sensitivity to ethical issues than most of his family) singles him out as the elect, especially when Agatha, too, is spiritually aware, and capable of love? The play does not answer this question; and to say that, not being a Monchensey, Agatha cannot expiate the Monchensey curse, is a technical quibble that does not solve the doctrinal dilemma

concerning Harry. Deliberate ambiguity about guilt in a play concerned with the expiation of guilt obscures the moral value of Harry's experience.

In terms of the play, this expiation of the family curse also remains undefined. In *MC*, the Chorus of the poor women of Canterbury, like the Chorus in Greek tragedy, received spiritual illumination through Thomas' martyrdom. In *CP*, too, Celia's self-sacrifice confers some degree of awareness on Peter and Edward and Lavinia. In *FR*, we have it on the authority of the somewhat clairvoyant Agatha that the curse has been formally resolved (p. 122), but there seem to be no positive consequences for the family. Harry's decision to renounce the world causes the death of Amy: the chorus of uncles and aunts remain trapped in their moral blindness, still baffled by the cardinal questions, "what is being done to us? / And what are we and what are we doing?" (p. 121). In terms of the actual events in *FR*, Harry's quest for salvation does not rise above the purely personal.

Before going on to an evaluation of Eliot's adaptation of the *Oresteia*, it is necessary to consider an interpretation of *FR*, from the psychoanalytical point of view, that is frequently put forward. Notable exponents of this view are C.L. Barber, Maud Bodkin and D.W. Harding.<sup>8</sup> Barber sees *FR* as trying to resolve "two socially incompatible motives": "hostile impulses towards wife and mother" and "the need to feel secure while being hostile". The solution is found in the transference of the affection due to wife and mother to the mother-substitute, Agatha. The Eumenides are somewhat tangentially explained as "symbols in an exhibitionistic fantasy latent in the play."<sup>4</sup> Maud Bodkin detects an alignment between "the ancient idea of the curse" and Harry's "inverted maternal compulsion", which extends also to his wife. Again, these feelings of hostility are seen to be subsumed in reconciliation with the substitute mother-figure, Agatha.<sup>5</sup> D. W. Harding also maintains the Oedipal reading, detecting "a very direct treatment of the separation experience called by Ian Suttie and other psychotherapists 'psychological weaning'..."<sup>6</sup>

There is evidence—especially in a 1932 broadcast entitled "The Search for Moral Sanctions"—that Eliot was aware of, and within limits approved of, the application of new theories of psychology to literature.<sup>7</sup> Religious and psycho-analytic experience have self-

awareness and integration of the personality as their common goals: Eliot was to exploit this aspect of psychiatric counselling in *CP*. In *FR*, Downing applies a kind of layman's psychology to Harry's spiritual anguish—"...his Lordship suffered from what they call a kind of repression" (p. 71)—while the hallucinations and visions are accounted for by Harry's being "rather psychic, as they say" (p. 72).

In the final analysis, however, the psychological approach is indefensible in that it ignores or misinterprets crucial elements in the play. Hereditary neurosis is certainly one way of explaining a family "curse", but the Christian terminology of the play strongly supports the idea of the "curse" as Original Sin. Secondly, if the Eumenides are to be regarded as projections of Harry's tortured mind, then how is it that they are also seen by Downing, Mary and Agatha (that is, the more sensitive or good-hearted characters at Wishwood)? Third, this line of analysis sees Harry's redemption in a total break with the past (symbolized by Amy), when the purport of the play seems to be that the past must be accepted before it can be transcended. Fourth, the climax of the play is unanimously placed in the scene of reunion with Agatha, when this is clearly only a prelude to Harry's decision to "follow the bright angels" (p. 111), a decision towards which the entire action has been moving. Finally, these critics suggest that there is something reprehensible about Harry's spiritual dilemma and its resolution. This violates the tenor of the play: Harry's recognition of, and ultimate redemption from, his state of sinfulness is surely intended by Eliot to be a paradigm of Christian salvation.

Eliot has in *FR* retained the essential moral and spiritual dimensions of the *Oresteia* while altering its doctrinal content—with repercussions on the play as a whole. The use of ancient devices—the curse, the Eumenides, the suggestion of an Aeschylean "miasma" enveloping the Monchensey home through "the noxious smell untraceable in the drains" (p. 66)—is unexpected, and suggestive of some older mode of being, some "deeper organisation" (p. 103) that underlies, and gives density to, the texture of the play.

The value of the classical analogue lies primarily in suggesting the pattern of guilt, atonement and absolution. Recognition of the Christian implication of Harry's experience certainly enriches our understanding of the play, and helps us to follow the ways in which Eliot depart from Aeschylus. Yet, the play may also be taken simply

as an enactment of the process of conversion and spiritual regeneration, without specific reference to Christianity. Use of motifs like the ancestral curse and the Eumenides helps to externalize and make concrete an essentially inward action, taking place initially below the threshold of conscious articulation.

On the other hand, the unevenness of *FR* as a play stems also from the transposition of the classical under-pattern into a contemporary setting. Eliot was aware of the "failure of adjustment between the Greek story and the modern situation". Certainly, the physical presence of the Eumenides is incongruous in a modern drawing room. Bearing in mind Eliot's own comment that "you cannot revive a ritual without reviving a faith", a similar charge of lack of assimilation can be levelled against the uneasy chorus of uncles and aunts.

The more significant aspect of the failure of adjustment, however, goes beyond questions of verisimilitude. Eliot pinpointed the basic ambiguity in the play during a 1959 interview— "...I tried to follow my original too literally and in that way led to confusion by mixing pre-Christian and post-Christian attitudes about matters of conscience and sin and guilt." We have already seen how blood-guilt—integral to the *Oresteia*—involves doctrinal dilemmas in *FR*. Then again, the classical concept of hereditary guilt is near enough to the Christian idea of Original Sin, but Eliot also needed to accommodate the Christian notion of deliverance through voluntary repentance: to make Harry's repentance sufficiently striking, Eliot burdens him with feelings of guilt somewhat in excess of his immediate situation, especially since it is not clear whether he actually did, or did not, murder his wife. It seems that the playwright was aware of this emotional imbalance in his hero, but the half-hearted attempt to explain it away through Downing's vague allusions to neurosis only complicates the issue. It is possible that part of Eliot's intention in using the classical parallel was to extend the field of reference of the contemporary action, and to support precisely this kind of complex argument. But the various levels—literal and symbolic, theological and psychological—are not totally integrated.

The slow inward growth of spiritual awareness is indeed a complex and elusive theme. But in a representational medium like the theatre, it is not enough to assert that such experience is "unspeakable/untranslatable" (p.66). The motifs of the curse and the Eumenides are made to bear the entire weight of explication of Harry's

moral struggle, but the devices are surely not sufficiently familiar to a modern audience to ensure instant comprehension. The presence of these devices from the classical analogue gives *FR* its strange power, its suggestion of deeper levels of experience underlying the immediate situation of Harry Monchensey—but ultimately the use of the classical analogue raises more problems than it resolves.

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3. C. L. Barber, "Strange Gods at T. S. Eliot's *The Family Reunion* in Leonard Ungar ed., *T. S. Eliot, A Selected Critique* (Russel & Russell, N. Y., 1966, pp 415-443); Maud Bodkin, *The Quest for Salvation in an Ancient and a Modern Play* (O. U. P., New York, London and Toronto, 1941); D. W. Harding, "Progression of Theme in Eliot's Modern Plays", *The Kenyon Review*, Vol. XVIII, Summer 1956, No 3, pp 337-360. A more recent reading of *FR* as an "Orestes variant of the Oedipus myth" is that by Johannes Fabricius (*The Unconscious and Mr. Eliot*, NNF Publishers, Copenhagen, 1967, p 125).
4. Barber, op. cit., pp 430, 429, 418.
5. Bodkin, op. cit., pp 46, 33, 35.
6. Harding, op. cit., p. 339.
7. "Psychology has very great utility in two ways. It can revive, and has already to some extent revived, truths long since known to Christianity, but mostly forgotten and ignored, and it can put them in a form and a language understandable by modern people to whom the language of Christianity is not only dead, but undecipherable." However, Eliot goes on to qualify that psychology is not a substitute for theology, but its "handmaid". (*The Listener*, Vol. VII, No. 108, 30 March 1932, p. 446).
8. Eliot's openness to the new psychological theories is attested to by the reviews of works by Freud and Jung, which appeared regularly in *The Criterion* from 1929 onwards.
9. *On Poetry & Poets*, Faber, London, Sixth impression, 1971, p.84.
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## THE THEME OF THE MULTIPLICITY OF LIFE IN *A PASSAGE TO INDIA*

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PRAVINSINH CHAVDA

‘India is not one.’

(*A Passage to India*)

*A PASSAGE TO INDIA* is a cosmic novel, not only in that it centres round some eternal and universal problems, but also in that on the physical level it goes beyond its immediate field. To comprehend the meaning of the novel, we have to go beyond the human drama which is at the centre of the novel, for the human drama is only one of the hundreds and thousands of faces of reality that Forster has encountered. The novelist wants to embrace the earth, the air and the sky. He constantly puts the human drama against the wider perspective of the world of nature—birds, animals, trees, the river and the sky. There are layers upon layers and cricles within circles. The immediate and the eternal, the finite and the infinite, merge into one another. This necessitates a technique that would present the many faces of reality simultaneously. Forster constantly shifts from one plane to another, and the meaning is to be sought not in any one plane—the Moslem doctor and his problems, but in the juxtaposition of that with other planes. One moment we are with Aziz and the problems of his private life; next moment the scene shifts to the river Ganges, then above the hills, and finally into the ‘over-arching sky’.

The theme of multiplicity, which runs through the novel, is symbolically presented in the very first chapter of the novel in the description of the city of Chandrapore. It is not one city. Chandrapore is an image of reality that changes its faces with the changes in perspective. Inside, where the Indians live, it is a dirty city; the river Ganges itself is dirty.

The streets are mean, the temples ineffective... The very wood seems made of mud, the inhabitants of mud moving... Houses do fall, people are drowned and left rotting... (1)\*

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\* Page numbers refer to the Everyman edition.

But, viewed from the civil station,

Chandrapore appears to be a totally different place. It is a city of gardens. It is no city, but a forest sparsely scattered with huts. It is a tropical pleasance washed by a noble river.

But these are the worlds of men. Beyond them, there is a third Chandrapore of which neither the Englishmen nor the Indians seem to take notice but which, nonetheless, is a self-contained world. The toddy palms and neem-trees and mangoes and pepal have risen over the houses and temples and built 'a city for the birds.' (2) For the Englishmen and Indians, their own Chandrapores are the whole truth. Unless they see both the faces of Chandrapore, no understanding, no passage to the heart of India, is possible. But the problem does not end here. What about the birds? They are always there, and a part of the whole truth.

So, again and again, the novelist escapes from the centre into other worlds of men and beasts. Before the bridge-party, the Nawab Bahadur and Mahmood Ali discuss it. They have been invited to the party, but while talking about it, the writer's vision moves out and extends into the infinite worlds of India.

He had spoken in the little room near the courts where pleaders waited for clients : clients waiting for pleaders sat in the dust outside. These had not received a card from Mrs. Turton. And there were circles even beyond these—people who were nothing but a loin-cloth, people who wore not even that, and spent their lives in knocking two sticks together before a scarlet doll—humanity grading and drifting beyond the educated vision... (28)

So life sometimes presents itself in the form of an infinite series of circles. At the bridge party the English and the Indians have gathered to make an attempt at bridging the gulf between the two races ; but starting from these doctors, majors and collectors, the novelist sees an insistent and restless series of circles :

Some kites hovered overhead, impartial, over the kites passed the mass of a vulture, and with an impartiality exceeding all, the sky... It seemed unlikely that the series stopped here. Beyond the sky must not there be something that over-arches all the skies, more impartial even than they? Beyond which again... (30)

Surrounding the human world, and parallel to it, is the animal world in the novel. Mrs. Moore is conscious of this world. After the quarrel between the mother and the son about her visit to the mosque has abated they talk about the river Ganges, and Mrs. Moore exclaims, "crocodiles down it too". The animal world goes on intruding ; when she goes to bed, she finds a wasp on the peg and the fact of the existence of a wasp brings her out of her own problems : she calls it 'pretty dear'".

Multiplicity is not limited only to the external world. It extends into the microscopic unit that is man and his actions. An individual is not like a straight line on a disc ; he is more like images seen in a house of glass. He is one and many. On his first appearance with his Moslem brethren, Aziz is a sentimental Moslem. But in the next scene, in the hospital, he becomes a totally different individual :

Several surgical cases came in and kept him busy. He ceased to be either outcaste or poet, and became the medical student, very gay and full of details of operations which poured into the shrinking ears of his friends. (42)

The problem of partial vision is later presented in another context. As with physical objects like Chandrapore, so with incidents. Incidents are not absolute external realities ; for different participants or witnesses they are different. The relationship with Indians which is so important for Mrs. Moore and Adela is 'a side-issue' for Ronny. Mrs. Moore, who, with Fielding, is at the conscious centre of the novel, is conscious of the multiplicity of meaning that clusters round an incident. For her the meeting with Aziz in the mosque with the moon in the background is an exciting experience. On their very first meeting, in a mysterious manner, may be because of the mosque and the moon, two representatives of two races are able to establish rapport. But after her quarrel with her son about the meeting, she realizes that the same meeting could be interpreted differently, if only the external actions, and not motives, were considered.

Yet, it could be worked into quite an unpleasant scene. The doctor had begun by bullying her, had said Mrs. Calendar was nice...he had alternately whined over his grievance and



patronized her, had run a dozen ways in a single sentence, had been unreliable, inquisitive, vain. (25)

Beside the spatial multiplicity, there is a temporal multiplicity. As life is spread out into space, so it moves on in time. As the world of Aziz is juxtaposed with other worlds—birds, farmers, sky—to prove that it is one of many, so the proposed marriage between Ronny and Adele is put in a perspective of time, to show that it is not the only of its kind.

She reminded herself of all that a happy marriage means, and and of her own happy marriages, one of which had produced Ronny. Adela's parents also had been happily married, and excellent it was to see the incident repeated by the younger generation. On and on !... (79)

And the real significance of this parade of life is that it is endless. You have never seen all. How can you form judgments ? This is revealed in Mrs. Moore's vision of the fort of Asirgarh as she is leaving India. After all that she has seen, the Hindus, the Moslems, and even the Caves, an ordinary place seen from the train makes her wonder—Asirgarh is still one more aspect of life.

What could she connect it with except its own name ? Nothing ; she knew no one who lived there. But it had looked at her twice and seemed to say, 'I do not vanish.' (181)

Everything is significant because of the mere fact that it exists. Life without Asirgarh, life without a wasp, is incomplete. Mrs. Moore regrets, 'I have not seen the right places.' Again, as her boat recedes away from Bombay, the cool coconut palms mock her :

So you thought an echo was India ; you took the Malabar caves as final ?... What have we in common with them, or they with Asirgarh ?

And this brings us to the central symbol in the novel—the Malabar Caves. The mocking by palms is justified in that the caves are not important in themselves. But as a symbol we have to consider the Malabar caves as final in the world of the novel because they are an image of the multiplicity of life. A single cave

has no meaning and offers no attraction. It is only the accumulation of cave after cave in an endless series that gives it significance.

The caves are readily described. A tunnel eight feet long, five feet high, three feet wide, leads to a circular chamber about twenty feet in diameter. This arrangement occurs again and again... Having seen two, having seen three, four, fourteen, twenty four, the visitor turns to Chandrapore... (106)

... but inside, deeper in the granite, are there certain other chambers that have no entrances ? (107)

Perhaps this is Forster's final judgment. All things are like one another, and all equally significant. And, finally, in this novel, as in *Howards End*, the only solution is to 'connect.' The moment of revelation comes to Professor Godbole when, in the ecstasy of the celebrations of the birth of the Lord, he sees a fly. The sky has no meaning if the earth is not there ; and the celebrations of the birth of the Lord are incomplete if the fly is not there.

INFLUENCE OF VEDANTA  
ON  
THE NOVELS OF CHRISTOPHER ISHERWOOD

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RANJITA COONDOO

CHRISTOPHER Isherwood is one of the few modern English novelists who have been influenced by a non-European faith. Like Aldous Huxley, Isherwood also has found in the Hindu philosophy of Vedantism, in meditation and contemplation that path to peace and harmony which he failed to find in traditional Christianity. Isherwood's first novel *All The Conspirators* was first published in 1928. It was followed by the publication of *The Memorial* in 1932. But he reached the zenith of his popularity in the nineteen thirties. This was the period during which he wrote his two Berlin novels, *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* and *Good Bye to Berlin*, presenting the stormy drama of Berlin as an after-effect of the First World War. After the publication of the two Berlin novels in 1935 and 1939, Isherwood occupied for a short period the forefront in the English literary scene. So Alan Wilde calls it, "the inflation of Isherwood's reputation in the 1930's." Virginia Woolf observes about the period :

If you read the current literary journalism, you will be able to rattle off a string of names—Day Lewis, Auden, Spender, Isherwood, Louis MacNeice and so on. (*The Leaning Tower*)

But Christopher Isherwood's departure for the United States in 1939 and his subsequent conversion to Vedantism mark a turning point in his career. With his movement toward a new country and an older religion, there came a radical change in his critical reputation, so much so that he is now one of the most neglected English writers.

In his early novels published before the First World War, Isherwood presents problems in the world limited by time, but his later novels show the possibility of transformation of man's temporal existence. The problem of the failure of contact between the self

and the external world posed in the pre-War novels is ultimately solved by his Vedantic belief in God transcendent. His later novels from *Prater Violet* (1945) onward, which undoubtedly bear the impression of his new religious belief, present the problem of the modern man's isolation in the midst of a crowd and also point towards a solution: the solution lies in establishing a permanent relation between the temporal and the spiritual.

Christopher Isherwood's friend Stephen Spender observes that Christopher was a rebel in his school days "passing through a phase of revolts against parents, conventional morality and orthodox religion." Isherwood himself remembers that certain experiences in his boyhood had given him a dread of authority and his reaction against authority and religion approached hysteria. He declared himself an atheist at the age of twenty. He was ready to tell everybody that religion was an evil, superstitious, reactionary nonsense and those who propagated it were enemies of progress and of mankind. By religion he understood the Christian religion as he encountered it through the Church of England. He hated Christianity because it is dualistic. God, high in heaven, rules with grim justice over us, his sinful and brutish subjects below. For a crime committed nearly two thousand years ago, each new generation has to beg for forgiveness. Who would not rebel against the concept of such a God? Who wouldn't abhor his tyranny? So Christopher took all the Christians to be hypocrites. The Christians said that men should be sent to hell for their sins. But Christopher said that hell did not exist, nor did God with his laws and punishments.

Isherwood went to the U.S.A. in 1938 and was introduced to Swami Probhavananda of the Los Angeles Vedanta Centre by Gerald Heard, whom he (Isherwood) had first met in London in 1930. In 1937 Gerald Heard, Aldous Huxley, Maria Huxley and Isherwood's friend Christopher Wood had left England and settled in California in the Los Angeles area. Isherwood was attracted to Gerald Heard: he read his article on Pacifism and decided to go to California to meet him. On reaching California, he came under the spell of Gerald Heard's personality and was attracted to Yoga, which was practised by him. Isherwood observes that he did not have his conversion through intellectual conviction and he believes that no one is convinced of anything by pure reason alone.

The right teacher must appear at exactly the right moment in the right place ; and his pupil must be in the right mood to accept what he teaches. Then and only then—can argument and reason exert their full power.

Isherwood now came to know the real nature of "Yoga", in which Gerald Heard was so passionately interested. He explained that Yoga is a Sanskrit word—the ancestor of the English term 'Yoke' and it means basically union. Yoga is a method—one of the many methods by which an individual can achieve union with God. Yoga philosophy teaches that we have two selves—an apparent outer self and an invisible inner self. The apparent self claims to be an individual and as such, other than all other individuals. The real self is unchanging and immortal. It was Gerald Heard who introduced Isherwood to Swami Prabhavananda of the Los Angeles Centre and in the late autumn of 1940, Prabhavananda decided to initiate him. This initiation brought him into close contact with the Vedanta Centre at Los Angeles and with the philosophy of Vedantism.

Isherwood has written an interesting biography of Sri Ramkrishna, the Indian saint. It is entitled *Ramakrishna and His Disciples* (1965), and in collaboration with Swami Prabhavananda, he has translated the *Bhagavad-Gita* (1944), *Shankar's Crest Jewel of Discrimination* (1947), and *How to Know God, the Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali* (1953). He has also edited *Vedanta for the Western World*, a collection of sixty-eight essays on Vedanta. There are three articles in it by Isherwood himself—*Hypothesis and Belief*, *Vivekananda and Sarah Bernhard* and *The Gita and War*. He has also written a Foreword to *Paramartha Prasanga, Towards the Goal Supreme* by Swami Virajananda and a biographical introduction to *What Religion is in the words of Swami Vivekananda*. In 1958 when he was to start writing the biography of Sri Ramkrishna, he decided to begin with a few chapters of autobiography explaining how he personally came to hear about Ramkrishna and became his devotee. But these chapters of autobiography later seemed to him rather irrelevant. So he published those chapters separately as an article *What Vedanta Means to Me*. Some of the ideas of this article are repeated in the pamphlet *An Approach to Vedanta*, published by the Vedanta Society of California in 1963. Isherwood

is still an active member of the Vedanta Society at Los Angeles. He goes there regularly to participate in the readings of the Gospels of Sri Ramkrishna. He has recently written an Introduction to a compilation by Swami Chetanananda of the Los Angeles Vedanta Centre, *Meditation and its Methods, According to Vivekananda*.

It is quite natural that Isherwood's religious belief should be reflected in his novels. In his earlier novels we perceive what Alan Wilde calls the irony of limitation. Isherwood's Novels of 1920's and 1930's—*All the Conspirators* (1928), *The Memorial* (1932), *Mr. Norris Changes Trains* (1935) and *Goodbye to Berlin* (1939) present the idea that our lives are temporally limited and that they have no ultimate significance. In his novels of 1960's, *Down There on a Visit*, (1962), *A Single Man* (1965), and *A Meeting By the Rivers* (1967), the nature of his irony changes. It now centres round the disparity between the world of spirit and the world of time. His novels from *Prater Violet* (1945) onward indicate the possibility of a final release from the world of time. In his last two novels written in 1964 and 1967, he aims to reconcile time and spirit. Here he envisages the progress of the soul in a world limited by time.

In *Prater Violet* Isherwood deals with the industrial world of film-making. It was published after he had been initiated into Vedantism and had translated the *Bhagavad-Gita*. So he seems here to have been influenced by the "nishkama dharma", the principle of non-attachment preached in the Gita. Lord Sri Krishna in the Gita initiates Arjuna into the principle of non-attachment, the idea of doing one's duty conscientiously without getting involved. "You have the right to do work but no right to enjoy its results." Isherwood himself observes :

In general mankind almost always acts with attachment, that is to say, with fear and desire. Desire for a certain result and fear that this result will not be obtained... But there is another way of performing action : and this is without fear and without desire. The Christians call it "holy indifference" and the Hindus "non-attachment". Both names are slightly misleading. They suggest coldness and lack of enthusiasm... The doer of non-attached action...does not run away from life ; he accepts it, much more completely than those whose

pleasures are tinged with anxiety and whose defeats are embittered by regret. (*Vedanta for the Western World*)

Isherwood has unconsciously followed this principle even in his pre-Vedantic days, that is, in his two Berlin novels. He is still a detached observer in *Prater Violet*, which is not only the story of making a motion picture but also the portrait of Bergmann, the Austrian film Director, who has been exiled from home during the most crucial period in its history. He is a sufferer from pre-War revolution in Germany and Austria. Due to financial difficulty he has agreed to direct the shooting of *Prater Violet*, produced by the Bulldog pictures in London, which presents a false picture of peace in Austria. Bergmann takes a fancy to Isherwood, the young script writer, who is still a novice. He (Bergmann) teaches him how to manage script-writing. But as a Director's assistant Isherwood is completely detached from the ambitions of the world of film-making. The film world has been shown in all its reality in *Prater Violet* – a world peopled with the technician, the sound recordist, the cutter, the propman, the electrician, and the camera operator, everyone of whom looks at the film from his own point of view. And just as they indulge in useless gossip, so do they sometimes show depth of thought. Even Roger, the sound recordist, has his own feeling of boredom and wonders, "What all this is for. Why not just peacefully end it?" His feeling of boredom leads him to think of suicide. At the time of writing this novel (1945), Isherwood was already interested in the question of the Atman's existence and realisation of man's real nature as preached by the Indian philosophers. He has again mentioned this question of boredom in the Introduction to the *Vedanta for the Western World*, published in 1948. He mentions there "Life's subtlest riddles of human boredom", which makes men feel an emptiness after attaining all the world's advertised objectives. As a solution to this problem of boredom, Isherwood mentions the antidote of realization of one's essential nature, which is called Atman in Vedanta.

It is rather strange that Isherwood has included the idea of escape from boredom in the speech of Roger, the sound recordist, who is least supposed to bother about spiritual questions. But Roger does not stop here. He puts another question which shows the depth

of his helplessness. Suddenly he asks Isherwood,

“Surely you are not fool enough to imagine there’s anything afterwards?”

Isherwood, who has already translated the Gita, knows the idea preached there about the immortality of the soul.

It is neither born, nor does it ever die. Like other things it does not attain its existence after birth. It is ever present. It is birthless, ever existing, eternal and old. It is not killed with the destruction of the body.

Unless we know this biographical fact about Isherwood’s interest in Indian philosophy and religion, the ideas of Roger may seem to be a little bit puzzling. From the point of view of technique, the remarks of Roger are defective because they seem to reflect the writer’s thought and are not the natural outcome of the circumstances in which the character has been placed. While discussing the use of dialogue in a novel, Miriam Allott quotes the view of Anthony Trollope, who says,

The writer may tell much of his story in conversation, but he may do so by putting such words in the mouths of his personages as personages so situated would probably use.

Andre Gide also guides his fellow writers by observing :

Never present ideas except in terms of temperament and characters.

This defect of technique is noticeable also in some of the other novels of Isherwood. In *Mr. Norris Changes Trains*, for instance, a rogue like Arthur Norris says,

“Hatred of tyranny is in my blood”.

Towards the end of *Prater Violet*, Isherwood presents some philosophical ideas. They have successfully finished the shooting of Prater Violet. There is, therefore, a party to celebrate the occasion. After the revelry at the party when Isherwood is walking home with Bergmann, the lonely deserted streets, the unusually bright street lamps and the whole midnight atmosphere make him feel that he is a traveller. Isherwood now thinks of many primal questions about life and death. The consciousness of approaching death, he thinks,



is always present in our minds and is motivating us to go on with our daily round of duties. He continues to think :

But if it is mine, if it is really within me...then...why, then... And at this moment but how infinitely faint, how distant, like the high far-glimpse of a goat-track through the mountains between the clouds, I see something else : the way that leads to safety.

Isherwood is obviously thinking of spiritual life and realization of the Supreme Being, the knowledge which enabled the ancient Indian sage to say,

I know Him who is self-illuminating like the sun beyond all darkness of ignorance. Knowing Him alone one can overcome the fear of death. There is no other way out.

In the passage with which *Prater Violet* ends, Isherwood mentions this way of escaping death.

Isherwood has altogether portrayed four characters with religious tendency—Eric in *The Memorial*, Elizabeth in *The World in The Evening*, Augustus Parr in *Down There On a Visit*, and Oliver in *A Meeting by the River*. But in spite of Eric's conversion to Catholicism, he still remains a Christian. So Elizabeth of *The World in the Evening* turns out to be the first character of Isherwood with a rebellious attitude against the Christian idea of God and with a belief in the impersonal God of Vedanta. She says that Christianity has turned God into a constitutional monarch. She seems to be referring to the Christian idea of original sin and its punishment by a revengeful God. Elizabeth believes in a source of life within her which cannot be destroyed. This is the Self or Atman, which has been described in the Gita as unborn, eternal and old, which is not destroyed when the body is killed. Though the author nowhere refers to Elizabeth's knowledge of Indian philosophy or to her attempt to practise Yoga, yet in her attempt to ignore physical as well as mental pain and indifference to praise by critics, she seems to be a real saint, who has been called "The Sthitapragna" in the Gita. According to the Gita, "The Sthitapragna" is an individual who is not worried by sorrow and is indifferent to happiness and is above lust, fear and anger.

All the post Second World War novels of Isherwood are influenced by his knowledge of the Vedanta. W. I. Scobie asked Isherwood,

“Does Vedanta appear at all in *A Single Man*?”

He replied,

“There are touches—the image at the end of the rock pools that are separate entities while the tide is out; and then the water comes and they are one flood of consciousness and you can’t say that one is separate from the others.”

The theme of *A Single Man* is loneliness and frustration in the technological and symbolic post-War world and it presents in the manner of *Ulysses* the story of a single day in the life of the hero. On the whole the world of bigness, of technology, of automatic and semi-automatic machinery has brought about the alienation of man from his fellow beings, and the solitary, bewildered individual sometimes turns homosexual, sometimes he takes mescaline and sees mystic visions. The feeling of isolation in the midst of a crowd, the fear of anonymity leads to a fear of annihilation. But he does not know that there is no fear of isolation for his real self has got affinity with Brahma or God Transcendent. Isherwood has dealt with this question in the Introduction to *Vedanta for the Western World*, where he says that in order to realize the Atman, the essential nature, which is within us, we have to stop to be ourselves. It is because of our ignorance that we think of our separate identity.

When speaking of Brahman within the creature, Vedanta uses for convenience another term “the Atman”. The Atman in Christian terminology is God immanent, Brahman is God Transcendent. Atman and Brahman are one.

Isherwood includes this idea in *A Single Man* in the following passage:

And just as the waters of the ocean come flooding over the pools, so over George and the others in sleep come the waters of that other ocean: that consciousness which is no one in particular but which contains everyone and everything, past, present and future and extends unbroken beyond the uttermost stars.

Then the author asks,

Is there, indeed, anything for them to tell except that the waters of the ocean are not really other than the waters of the pool?

The novel ends with the death of the hero George. The discussion about the ocean and the pool, the universal and particular consciousness as part of each other points out towards the solution of all the problems of modern man. The all-engulfing Universal Consciousness is God Transcendent and the particular consciousness of every individual is God immanent. Isherwood's study of Vedanta tells him that there is no difference between God Transcendent and God immanent and "Knowing Him man transcends the fear of death."

Both *Prater Violet* and *The World in the Evening* give us glimpses into the spiritual world and show the influence of Indian philosophy on Isherwood's mind. But Vedantism as a theme has not appeared in any one of the earlier novels. Though there is an indication of it in *Paul*, the last story of *Down There on a visit*, it does not really appear till he writes his religious novel *A Meeting By The River*. In *A Meeting By the River*, Isherwood has shown Oliver undergoing a test of the soundness of his new faith, when he is subjected to criticism, taunt and ultimately temptation by his own worldly-minded brother Patrick. Oliver conquers all the temptations. He knows that a Vendatist has to mortify his own self and has to realize his essential nature which is divine. Oliver does not have any mystical vision. The novel presents the painful process of his attempt to overcome all temptations, to renounce all vanity which may be called mortification of the ego-sense. This is a terrible psychological condition through which an ordinary man with spiritual tendency passes before the birth of his spiritual life. Isherwood's hero, who does not claim any superhuman power, has to undergo spiritually a superhuman task. Isherwood has hinted at the idea more than once that many modern Western men try to escape from their feeling of loneliness and boredom by committing suicide. An alternative solution is found here in the life of Oliver, who as a convert to Vedantism, silently points out the way of escape from the feeling of loneliness. A believer in Vedantism understands that man cannot be lonely in the real sense of the term as the Almighty God manifests himself in complete silence like the huge trees and pervades the whole

universe and through Him man is united with all his fellow beings. The *World in the Evening* as also the later novels of Isherwood are concerned with the discovery or the failure to discover the "deathless soul". These novels are concerned with the world of time with its sense of individual identity and the subsequent feeling of isolation as well as the timeless world of the spirit, the world of Atman and the inner light.

In the Introduction to *Vedanta For the Western World* Isherwood explains how Vedanta asserts that man's essential nature is divine. We do not understand this due to our ignorance. This idea is beautifully illustrated in Isherwood's parable "The Wishing Tree", included in *Vedanta for the Western World*. It is the story of some children whose uncle tells them of a magic tree Kalpataru, which has the power of fulfilling all the wishes if you can wish properly. The Kalpataru tree listens to all the wishes, even the whispers of children and grants all their prayers. Some of these bring harm to them. The Kalpataru tree's magic is that the gifts which it gives to the children are not real gifts. At the fag end of their life some of the children, who are now old men and women, realize that they made a mistake in asking for wrong things.

But in that garden, long ago, there was one child whose experience was different from that of all others. For when he had crept out of the house at night, and stood alone, looking up into the branches of the tree, the real nature of the Kalpataru was suddenly revealed to him. For him the Kalpataru was not the pretty magic tree of his uncle's story—it did not exist to grant the stupid wishes of the children—it was unspeakably terrible and grand. It was his father and his mother. Its roots held the world together, and its branches reached behind the stars. Before the beginning it had been and it would be always.

The Kalpataru tree is the 'Anadi ananta' Brahma without beginning and without end. The children are the worldly minded men and women who approach God only with prayers for their material prosperity. When all the prayers are fulfilled they realize that they

made a mistake in asking for the wrong things. The wise child is a saint who knows from the beginning that God is not only Kalpataru, a Wishing tree. Like our parents He is the source of our existence and the reward of the saint is his wisdom.

## MYTHS, TRADITION AND WALLACE STEVENS

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BHUPENDRA NATH SEAL

WALLACE Stevens is one of the greatest poets of this century who have left behind a rich legacy of the poetry of individualism. One of the significant marks of his individuality is that his poetry shows an irreverence for old myths and tradition. A romantic symbolist, he can penetrate beyond the veil of illusion and unfold the grim truth behind mimetic appearances. One of the important notes that are found in his poetry is his confrontation of reality—reality absolute and shorn of illusion. One must remember in this connexion Stevens' poetic credo: 'Poetry is an act of the mind'. His mind is not concerned with the idea of a thing but the thing itself. His mind is

the great poem of winter, the man,  
Who, to find what will suffice,  
Destroys romantic tenements  
Of rose and ice.

(*'Man and Bottle'*)

Stevens' mind destroys old beliefs and ideas which he regards as too inadequate in the world of reality. Tennyson in the Victorian age has spoken of the corruption of the world by the continuity of the old order—'one good custom'. Stevens aims at the purgation of the world by ridding it of

...an old delusion, an old affair with the Sun,  
An impossible aberration with the moon,  
A grossness of peace.

(*'Man and Bottle'*)

Stevens tries to grasp reality. It is not unnatural therefore that flirtation with age-old myths and tradition is not his trade. The lure of old myths attracted the vision of the earlier poets. Keats found the fountain of perennial delight in the rich vintage of Greek

myths. Even to moderns like Eliot and Yeats myths are meaningful. But to Stevens they are not. He believes in reality in life which, to use his own phrase, is 'the elimination of what is dead.' He breaks with tradition when he says in 'Adagia': '...the young poet is a god. The old poet is a tramp'. Stevens, however, creates independent myths of his own, and these new myths considerably heighten the effects of his poetry.

Stevens sees man as shorn of his myth-created halo. Such a man is the subject of his poetry. In the section entitled 'Mystic Garden and Middling Beast' of his poem, 'A Thought Revolved', he considers man as 'happy rather than holy', not an angel but 'the middling beast'. In Stevens' own myth man is

With all his attributes no god but man  
Of men whose heaven is in themselves.

To him the statue of an old hero symbolizes how old myths and old fictions crumble to dust. Thus the idea of an earthly divinity, by the rejection of mythical heaven of everlasting elysium, naturally belongs to Stevens. In the poem 'Sunday Morning' he creates a new myth of death. To him death is the symbol of perfection, the mother of beauty :

Death is the mother of beauty, mystical,  
Within whose burning bosom we devise  
Our earthly mothers waiting, sleeplessly.

Stevens reacts against the old myth—the Christian paradise of changeless beauty and perfect sky. He also creates his own myth of secular religion which is rooted in the boisterous devotion to the 'naked' sun. The sun is celebrated for its life-giving power and not for its mythological attributes. The chant of men in devotion to the sun is, to him, the chant of paradise :

Supple and turbulent, a ring of men  
Shall chant in orgy on a summer morn  
Their boisterous devotion to the sun,  
Not as a god, but as a god might be,  
Naked among them, like a savage source.  
Their chant shall be a chant of paradise.

('Sunday Morning')

This chant suggests heavenly fellowship of men that perish. Heaven, made of silent shadows, has nothing to attract Stevens who creates a new divinity of earthly life with its emotional and richly sensuous experiences. The lady, as described in the poem, has therefore no faith in divine revelations. She believes only in natural laws. Stevens, like Rabindranath Tagore, is not satisfied with traditional heavens, 'the unchanging paradise of perfect sky'. He reacts against mythical abstraction as Tagore also does.

Death has evoked in earlier poets bitter-sweet nostalgia. But to Stevens the myths associated with death are stale and unprofitable. He wants to see death as it is. In the poem, 'Death of a Soldier', he confronts the reality of death. To him winter is associated with death. Hence, the traditional description of winter is absent in his poetry. Stevens recreates reality with winter that stands for usual barrenness and negation. In the poem 'The Emperor of Ice-Cream' Stevens treats death as a commonplace. He seems to emphasize the idea that there is nothing serious in death. Ronald Sukenick's comment on the poem is in point here: 'Here we recognize that the occasion is a kind of wake, at which death, too, is treated as something commonplace, and at which only pleasure can give relief from that fatal commonplace to which we are all reduced... There is no separation of the soul, no supernatural myth.' The poem thus gives a lie direct to the belief (incidentally, also the belief of W. B. Yeats) that there is progress of the soul after death.

The poem 'Dance of the Macabre Mice' also illustrates Stevens' irreverence for myths. The statue which the poet describes symbolizes a myth that survives. But it actually survives as a skeleton. He treats the statue with as unwanted creatures as mice that are macabre. Change to Stevens is very important as it reveals the reality of life. Hence the statue of General Du Puy, which represents the old, is transformed in the end into 'rubbish'. It is reality that makes old myths and old fictions obsolete.

In the poem, 'The Comedian as the Letter C', Stevens deals with the mythology of self. Washed away by the sea, Crispin, the introspective voyager, becomes a nearest minuscule, the letter C. The self of Crispin, the insatiable egotist, is severed by the sea ; and



the severance makes a new Crispin :

Severance was clear. The last distortion of romance  
Forsook the insatiable egotist. The sea  
Severs not only lands but also selves.  
Here was no help before reality.  
Crispin beheld and Crispin was made new.

(*'The Comedian as the Letter C'*)

The ancient Crispin, who espoused the verboseness of old mythologies, undergoes dissolution as Triton. Triton, who essentially belongs to the mythical age, has been fittingly associated with Crispin. After dissolution, the Triton of vast mythological force changes and is rendered 'incomplicate' with that which made him Triton. What remains are only memorial gesturings of old myths :

Just so an ancient Crispin was dissolved.  
The valet in the tempest was annulled.

Crispin leaves his old self. The experience of his voyage makes him dissatisfied with the conventional. He now sees the material world as it is. He is no longer sentimental and poetic. He becomes unpoetic in order to grasp reality. Crispin is no more a product of conventional imagination. The Maya sonneteers in Yucatan deal with sentimental conventions. But the conventional themes do not attract Crispin's vision. Crispin is the image of Stevens himself who breaks with tradition to show the pressure of reality on the life of imagination. It has been therefore quite appropriate that Crispin, the buffoon, is anti-mythological. He gives up Yucatan, the myth of imagination, because :

He could not be content with counterfeit,  
With masquerade of thought, with hapless words  
That must belie the racking masquerade.

(*'The Comedian as the Letter C'*)

Stevens expounds his belief in 'The Necessary Angel' that modern reality is 'a reality of decreation in which our revelations are of belief, but the precious portents of our powers'. To Stevens the new myth of Cezanne, the tribal god of modern painting, is true as Cezanne helps to create 'a new reality, a modern reality, a

reality of decreation'. The essence of Stevens lies in the existence of man in the material world—a world without imagination.

Deeply concerned with the actual, Stevens propounds new myths as the subject of modern poetry which, he thinks, differs thematically from the traditional poetry of the past. The poets today must people their pages with men and women that are not related to the past. In the introduction to 'The Necessary Angel' Stevens says: 'One function of poet at any time is to discover by his own thought and feeling what seems to him to be poetry at that time.' The same idea is crystallized into poetry in the poem 'Of Modern Poetry':

The poem of the mind in the act of finding  
what will suffice. It has not always had  
To find: the scene was set; it repeated what  
Was in the script.

Then the theatre was changed  
To something else. Its past was a souvenir.  
It has to be living, to learn the speech of the place.  
It has to face the men of the time and to meet  
The women of the time.

Stevens is deeply concerned with the problems of belief. He sees how in modern life old beliefs are crumbling to fragments giving rise to the crisis of faith and incredibility of traditions and myths. It is this present crisis of faith which creates

That obsolete fiction of the wide river in  
An empty land; the gods that Boucher killed;  
And the metal heroes that time granulates.  
('Asides on the Oboe')

The Jordan, the river of mythological importance, raises associations too hazy to leave any forceful impact; and the gods do not evoke as much regard as in the past. The mythological poems of old are important only as poems. Their meanings do not influence us any more. Stevens believes that the modern man lives in a secular world which is no longer related to the religious myths of old. The roots of Stevens' belief lie in the concept that

The earth, for us, is flat and bare.  
 There are no shadows. Poetry  
 Exceeding music must take the place  
 Of empty heaven and its hymns.

(*'The Man with the Blue Guitar'*)

Thus Wallace Stevens emphasizes the present and the real. Myths and traditions are to him no more than inactive beliefs. Such an attitude to myths and tradition may be considered as a prejudice. But it is undoubtedly the prejudice of a poet who is highly individual and modern. Stevens makes repeated claims for the commonplace in his poetry. He thinks that there can be no life in the ruins, no meaning in mere memorial survival of a thing which is long dead and gone. Only the aquiline pedants who live in the past, find life in the relics :

Confined by what they see,  
 Aquiline pedants treat the cart  
 As one of the relics of the heart.

(*'The Prejudice Against the Past'*)

Stevens' attitude to myths and tradition reveals what Daniel Fuchs calls his 'typical modernist arrogance'. To such a modern arrogant mind the past is trash which reality rejects.

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Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers for India.

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Edited by

JYOTI BHUSAN BHATTACHARYYA

Published by

DILIP KUMAR MUKHERJEE

on behalf of the University of Calcutta at Asutosh Building, Calcutta-700 073  
and printed by him at The Pooran Press, 21 Balaram Ghosh Street,  
Calcutta-700 004.

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Copies are sold at the Calcutta University Publications Sales Counter,  
Asutosh Building, Calcutta 700 073.